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The Nation.

November 27, 1982 $1.25; U.K. 65p

EDITORIAL

THE PIPELINE DEBACLE

If Ronald Reagan's gas pipeline sanctions were worth their weight in hot air in the first place, they are worth keeping. If they are not worth keeping, they were not worth their weight in hot air in the first place. What the President cannot pretend is that he was right both ways. Yet this is exactly what he does pretend.

Never mind that the French would not be a party to the agreement, nor that the West Germans preserve a tactful silence on the matter. Never mind that, from an Administration that believes itself "tested" by each new Soviet action, this is a contemptibly short-sighted and half-baked move. The President pretends that all is well.

He could have appeared tough but inflexible. He could have appeared flexible but erratic. It takes a real operator to get the worst of both worlds—"adamant for drift," as Churchill once put it, "and resolved only to be irresolute."

The ludicrous symmetry of the pipeline affair tells us something worth remembering about the futility of this Administration's thoughtless policies. The country was never told by Reagan what he hoped to achieve by the pipeline sanctions, and now it doesn't really know why they were lifted. Were the sanctions imposed to punish the Soviet Union for its actions in Afghanistan, or Poland? Or did Reagan wish to teach our European allies a lesson in who is master? Either way, his reversal has changed nothing. The Russians are still in Afghanistan, their military satraps in power in Poland. The Europeans are still defiantly insisting that they have the right to trade wherever they want.

If Reagan intended the removal of the sanctions as a signal of reconciliation to the new Soviet leaders, he didn't say so. If he had, we would applaud. As it is, we can only conclude that this is another Reagan policy that began without clear purpose and has ended as it began.

THE VETS COME TO WASHINGTON
Bruce Weigl

THE E.P.A.'S TOXIC WASTE STALL
Bob Drogin

SOLIDARITY STILL LIVES
Daniel Singer

MAKING CULTURES EXTINCT
Victor Perera

VAN DUYN: A POET OF DAILINESS
Elizabeth Frank

FROM THEIR 'SPECIAL PAIN'

WHAT THE VIETNAM VETS CAN TEACH US

PETER MARIN

The dedication of the Vietnam veterans' memorial on the Washington Mall two weeks ago aroused the familiar controversies about its design and its cultural and political functions, echoing many of the points of view about the war that remain among us. There is very little one can say about the monument itself. Its clean lines demand contemplation rather than patriotism or veneration, and perhaps no one can argue with that; but they do very little to remind Americans about the actual nature of the Vietnam War—the horrors and corruption, the moral culpability and negligence, the excesses—or about their own country.

One cannot be surprised by that, of course. Roland Barthes pointed out long ago that a culture's myths serve two functions at once: they commemorate the past but also disguise it, they make it both more and less than it was, they erode history and with it the palpable truths of specific human action and its consequences. It is much the same with monuments or memorials. These are the material ways societies mythologize the past, making it a part of memory rather than thought, an object of sentiment rather than sentience. The Vietnam memorial is no exception, and the fact that we do the same thing in America makes us no worse than anyone else; one can hardly expect images of napalmed children and weeping parents to remind us of what the war was really like. And it is true, too, that there are so many veterans currently in one sort of distress or another that one ought not to be overly scrupulous about anything that may, like the memorial, alleviate it.

(*Continued on Page 558*)

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LETTERS.

RATING REAGAN

New York City
Christopher Hitchens ends his rather savage sketch of Reagan at midterm with the assertion that "Reagan is doing to the country what he can no longer do to his wife" ["Minority Report," *The Nation*, Oct. 30]. Passing over this alarming equation of marital coupling with violent and repressive national policies (is sex something a man *does to* a woman?), it's an incredibly ageist statement—unless Hitchens knows something about the Reagans' marriage that *The Times*'s "Washington Talk" has somehow found unfit to print. *Gara LaMarche*

Houston
What will *The Nation* do about the appalling last sentence in Hitchens's article in the issue of October 30?

Why, after cogently listing Reagan's misbehavior, did Hitchens feel the need to add a gross and irrelevant insult? An insult to Reagan—perhaps undeserved, since Hitchens cannot know; an insult to *Nation* readers, who, if they fancy such innuendoes, have for all the years I've been a subscriber found them elsewhere; an insult to both men and women in the equation it takes for granted between exploitation and making love. . . . *Hally Wood*

Philadelphia
I have been a *Nation* reader for many years because, among its other merits, the magazine frequently takes the lead in observing important social and literary trends. Sadly, the turn taken in the last sentence of Christopher Hitchens's "Minority Report" makes me anxious for the future of journalism.

Hitchens's barroom humor is more insulting to women everywhere and to *The Nation* itself (not to mention the poor readers!) than it will ever be to Ronald Reagan. It is the sort of school newspaper writer's remark that a responsible editor would draw a long blue line straight through. Please, in the future, guard us readers against such arrogant tastelessness. In a Monty Python skit it is possible to mistake insult for argument, but it should not be so in a leading journal. *Haydon Rochester Jr.*

New York City
A few questions for Christopher Hitchens:

(1) How has Hitchens come to spend so much time in the Reagans' bedroom? Has he allowed for the possibility that they find his presence inhibiting and wait for him to doze off?

(2) What *is* the relationship between having erections and being a good President, exactly? Is it enough if the First Lady is happy with the size, frequency and durability of the erections, or should Congress set minimum standards? I mean, if it's sexual fireworks at night or 10 percent unemployment in the morning, the country can't be too careful. Also, does it count if the erection is gay? And how about an exemption for women—or am I missing the point?

(3) Would Hitchens like to reconsider his recent scathing review ["Earache," *The Nation*, Sept. 11] of gossip columnist Diana McClellan's *Ear on Washington*? As I remember it, Hitchens expressed a great deal of moral indignation over some of McClellan's journalistic habits—citing no sources, recycling ancient dirty jokes as hot scoops and posing as more of an insider than she was, for instance.

Maybe Hitchens and McClellan ought to trade jobs. *Katha Pollitt*

HITCHENS REPLIES

Washington, D.C.
It was the President I had hoped to offend. Missed again. *Christopher Hitchens*

'WASHINGTON POST' FICTIONS

Los Angeles
I do not agree that *The Washington Post* "unreservedly withdrew the allegations" about the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [editorial, "The Smear Again," *The Nation*, Oct. 23]. It has invented a fictitious United States League, which it claims is "clean," while leaving standing the allegations about the real W.I.L.P.F.

Furthermore, the last paragraph of *The Post*'s "apology" clearly serves notice that it has reserved the right to traduce all peace activists who meet with Soviet women. . . .
Barbara Gado, W.I.L.P.F.

THE 'CHICAGO SCHOOL'

Chicago
The recent editorial on the "Chicago School" of economics ["Nobels: Chicago," *The Nation*, Nov. 6] offered penetrating criticisms of some of its theories, criticisms which, obvious as they seem, never manage to intrude on the illusions those theories foster. At a time when the largest American corporations have about as much interest in competition as the Soviet Union does, certain Chicago theorists still claim that government is the only obstacle to the free market system. (It is worth noting that the intellectual founders of this school, from Adam Smith to Friedrich Hayek, saw government control and corporate monopoly as fairly equal threats to freedom.)

To anyone concerned about the growth of corporate power, it must have seemed inappropriate that the editorial largely passed over the achievements of George Stigler. He has pointed out the important fact that government regulation usually favors particular businesses to the detriment of competition and thus of the public good. Rules for environmental protection and automobile safety are exceptions to the current trend; most recent regulations tend to create or protect entrenched corporate power by restricting competition. The archetypal spokesman for modern regulation is not Ralph Nader but Lee Iacocca or Roy Williams. . . .

We learn from Stigler's work (whatever he may have learned from it) that the "partnership of business, government, and labor," lately demanded by both left and right, is merely a scheme by which three entrenched powers protect one another from public accountability; business and labor perpetuate bad government with campaign funds, while government protects them from more efficient competitors. The increasingly likely result is a society in which it will be as difficult to buy a good car as it is now to find a good congressman. *Robert DiSalle*

FURTHERING MITFORD'S ANALYSIS

Madison, N.J.
Jessica Mitford's "An Update on the 'Prison Business'" [*The Nation*, Oct. 30] is a distinguished corrective for a lot of the so-called "thinking" about prisons and prisoners. I am just sorry that she did not go further in her analysis.

As I look at the deprivation in such places as Newark and the Bronx, all I can think about is how poor conditions force the building of more prisons. Why do we not spend more money attacking the causes of crime, the stimulants of criminal behavior? Why must we throw more and more people into "finishing schools for criminals," our prisons?

Among blue-collar youth, models of "success" are too frequently found outside the law, in careers that can lead directly to prison. Their activities to relieve the boredom of unemployment often take them in the same direction.

If we also imprisoned a proportionate number of white-collar criminals, many "success" models from the more privileged suburbs would become a matter of concern. White-collar crime costs us a great deal more than blue-collar crime. Mitford did not touch on that. *Alfred McClung Lee*

AUTHOR'S QUERY

For a biography of American biographer Frank MacShane, I would be interested in letters, remembrances, anecdotes, etc.

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EDITORIALS.

L. Brezhnev, R.I.P.

Measured in time, the eighteen-year reign of Leonid Brezhnev is impressive. Measured in achievement—that is, of the needed transformation of the Stalinist heritage—it is terribly disappointing. And the two are intimately linked. Brezhnev, the typical organization man, stayed so long at the top of the pyramid of power because he left it fundamentally unchanged.

Stalin, in industrializing Russia at breakneck speed, discarded the early egalitarian dreams, encouraged wage differentials, built hierarchies. But while creating a new apparatchik elite, he prevented it, through permanent terror and periodic purges, from fully consolidating its power. After his death, wanting only the stability and security to maintain and enlarge its position of privilege, it was forced to do battle with Nikita Khrushchev's belief in the urgent need for change, ultimately forcing Khrushchev from office and installing Brezhnev as the guardian of its power and position.

The first Soviet leader to be entirely a product of the Stalin era, Brezhnev was the epitome of an apparatchik. Though he granted concessions to other privileged segments of Soviet society—generals, technocrats and managers—the dominant position of the Communist Party was his chief concern. In his case even more than in Stalin's, one may talk of the absolute dictatorship of the party—or, more precisely, its apparat.

A statesman's stature depends on the criteria by which he is judged. If we assess Brezhnev by standards applied to

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Western politicians, he does not come off badly. He showed a certain grasp of economic matters; his ability to survive the Stalin purges argues a certain bureaucratic skill; and his duration in office suggests a capacity for compromise as well as unscrupulousness. No one would think of him as a libertarian, but he could maintain that people are less frightened in the Soviet Union now than they were in Stalin's time. In foreign policy he could point to the maintenance of an empire from the Bering to the Elbe and its position as one of the world's two superpowers; the Romanovs would be impressed.

His stature diminishes considerably if we judge Brezhnev by the standard which he once rashly claimed as his own: how much he made the Soviet Union into a mature socialist society well advanced on the road to communism. A strange socialist society, indeed, in which the social division of labor is unchanged, equality is a heresy and all power flows from above; a workers' paradise in which workers have no political power; a "state of all the people" in which people have no say; a nation one step from stateless communism in which the unwithering state dwarfs civil society.

Other elements can be added to the "socialist" failures of Brezhnevism. The once-monolithic international movement is shattered. The Soviet tanks that entered Czechoslovakia in 1968 paved the way for a Eurocommunism which has now broken sharply with the Soviet model. And the Polish workers who destroyed the myth of Communist parties representing the interests of the working class have also threatened the stability of neo-Stalinist regimes throughout the empire.

Brezhnev's successors will have to deal with this legacy, and they may have to deal with a rising labor movement in the Soviet Union as well. The biggest price Brezhnev paid for survival was a steady slackening of economic growth, and now the fat needed to oil the squeaking machine is running out. In a desperate search for economic efficiency, Brezhnev's heirs are likely to be driven to carry out a genuine managerial reform—and in widening the powers of the managers, they may also sow the seeds of an autonomous labor movement.

On the morrow of a smooth succession, at the very beginning of the reign of Yuri Andropov and his colleagues, it is pleasant, if rather bold, to venture that early in that reign they may have to cope not only with the revival of the labor movement in Poland but with the birth of a similar movement at home.

Court Journalism

The latest Presidential press conference was a disheartening, even repugnant, spectacle. Many of the questions were of a degree of servility which merits the term "court journalism." There were honorable exceptions (Lesley Stahl of CBS and Godfrey Sperling Jr. of *The Christian Science Monitor* among them), but for the most part the reporters were indistinguishable from White House press officers. They phrased their questions in terms of both the agenda and what we may charitably call the mind of the President.

Lou Cannon of *The Washington Post* was ridiculously apologetic in posing an utterly routine question about the discrepancy between Presidential rhetoric and political reality. Lee Roderick of the Scripps League Newspapers attempted to scale new heights of inanity, and succeeded. He took the change of leadership in the Soviet Union as an occasion to ask the President to comment on our blessings in living under a different system. A pupil at one of those fundamentalist schools favored by the Administration could not have been more pious.

The public is ill served by a press corps that proffers these lessons in subservience. The notion that press conferences are effective substitutes for the parliamentary question periods of other democracies has never seemed so unreal.

Precisely why the press corps should abase itself in this fashion is puzzling. Perhaps it intuits the chaos and rage beneath the Presidential surface, a glimpse of which was provided a few weeks ago at that meeting with Republican candidates where Reagan told an annoying questioner to shut up. Casting themselves in the role of psychotherapists, the reporters may be seeking to serve the nation by behaving so cooperatively, avoiding the prospect of the real Reagan bursting forth and threatening the future of the globe. There is a function, however, to putting pressure on Presidents at press conferences: it allows the citizenry to take full measure of their elected servants.

Robert Kittle of *U.S. News & World Report* deserves special mention. After the nuclear freeze movement's success on election day, the President might have been asked to comment on the public's view of the arms race. Instead, Kittle explicitly invited Reagan to repeat his charge that Soviet agents were active in the peace movement. The President, of course, obliged. In a second question, Kittle inquired into the "extent" of Soviet involvement. The President gravely declared that he could not discuss "intelligence matters."

The White House press office, asked to produce the evidence to back the President's charges, cited articles from *The American Spectator*, *Commentary* and *Reader's Digest* [see Frank Donner, "The Campaign to Smear the Nuclear Freeze Movement," *The Nation*, November 6]. The author of the *Digest* article, a former intelligence officer named John Barron, told the press that he had used reports of "three intelligence and/or security services" which he was not free to name.

Senator Gary Hart then entered the controversy, asking the President to provide materials to support his charges to the Senate Armed Services Committee, if necessary in closed session. The proposal is absurd. Even in the very unlikely event that the Administration agrees to a closed session, those who favor the President will tell us afterward that the evidence is convincing, and others will remain skeptical. The public will be no wiser. Hart should call for a public inquiry by both the House and Senate Intelligence and Judiciary Committees.

As to Soviet influence on the peace movement, it would in fact be surprising if it wasn't attempted. The internationalization of politics is a familiar phenomenon—did not

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the State Department sponsor a conference recently on altering the Communist system? But attempted Soviet manipulation does not somehow absolve Western governments of their share of responsibility for arms policies that threaten human existence.

Perhaps by its wild and undocumented charges of Soviet (read K.G.B.) manipulation the Administration intends to make a friendly gesture toward Yuri Andropov, long an expert in these matters. We rather think, however, that the President's statements were merely the work of a poltroon.

'Welcome Home'

It is the first national gathering of Vietnam veterans, a reception sponsored by *Stars & Stripes*, the AmVets and the Vietnam Veterans of America on the ground floor of the *Stars & Stripes* building in Washington, D.C. They are here for the dedication of the Vietnam memorial and the weeklong salute to those who fought in America's longest war. They arrive in small groups all evening, the way they'd come back to the country so long ago: at night, in the rain, in small groups. Someone believed then it was possible to slip us all back from the war into the spaces we'd left a year before. It turns out it was not possible. It turns out many of us have hurt all this time.

By 9 o'clock Friday night the room is packed with Vietnam veterans, World War II veterans, Army nurses, politicians, the maimed, the curious, the angry and bitter, the hapless, the gung-ho warriors of every war, real, imagined and of our collective memory. We are given $5,000 worth of beer and one another and are cordoned off from the world for the night. We spill out into the streets and huddle together in squad-sized groups to tell all the old curses.

I don't know why we came here. We are so different now. At the Agent Orange hearing in the Cannon Building, a man from Cleveland stood up and addressed the distinguished panel of experts. Sobbing, he told the story of his child dying from brain disease and the story of his own long suffering as a result of exposure to the monster Dioxin, the head's revenge on the body. He cried and he pleaded and he asked only for help. It is fifteen years and no one has helped him. And he wondered how long he has to wait. "Let the world decide," he said. One by one they stood and testified, each in his different pain, all with the lost years in common. "Let the world decide," the man from Cleveland said, crying, and sat down.

But the world is kept out tonight. And the night blossoms into stories, into the tropical moments recalled until the stories begin to link and merge and somehow become one story. I can feel the healing all around.

Later, I stood in the rain away from everyone with Gary Beikirch. He is a big, shy and humble man who won the Medal of Honor for what he did in Vietnam. When he came back from the war, Gary moved to the Maine mountains to heal. He had already lived a thousand lives and he was tired. Two years after his return, they called him down to Washington and Nixon pinned the medal to his chest. Nixon, dear God. Gary went home and put the medal away as he had tried to put away the nightmare it stood for.

We shivered in the rain. The sense that something good was happening around us caught us both by surprise. It seemed possible that the ghosts could be driven finally from our hearts. And Gary, who doesn't tell his pain easily, opened up. He played it all back so carefully and so clearly I could hardly stop myself from shaking. He was a senior medic for a Special Forces A team on the Laotian border attacked on April Fool's night by three North Vietnamese regiments. Twice wounded, his legs numb from shrapnel lodged near his spine, he dragged himself from soldier to soldier, child to child, to try to stop the bleeding, until he was wounded again, his stomach torn open, and still he went into fire again and again, tending the others until the pain overcame him.

Afterward, we went back inside. I watched the faces for hours. I was lost in the faces. Standing in the center of the noise, the beautiful lies, all the loud talk that would pass tonight for forgiveness, I heard someone in a clear voice say to someone else, "Welcome home." And later someone else said it. And someone else. I felt the room stand still. I felt a kind of hope I'd thought was gone. I imagined that what was happening here would move out across the country in the weeks to come in a wave of understanding in which we could all come to know one another again. I believed we could finally look one another in the eyes again and say straight the things that burn inside.

I think we came, without really knowing it, to make the memorial our wailing wall. We came to find the names of those we lost in the war, as if by tracing the letters cut into the granite we could find what was left of ourselves. It turns out that, beyond all the petty debates over the monument, no veteran could turn his back on the terrible grace of Maya Lin's wall and the names of the 57,939 who died or disappeared in Vietnam from July 1959 to May 1975: America's longest, most vicious sin. Gary Beikirch told me that when he saw the wall for the first time, as he scanned the endless list of names for some familiar ones, he suddenly saw his own face reflected in the polished stone and understood that it was a memorial for all of us.

Fewer marched this cold Saturday morning than died or were wounded during those sixteen years. The parade was quiet and simple; it all seemed so quickly to pass away. Sadly, this is all many Vietnam veterans ever wanted: to be let back into the lives of our families and friends, to have a small parade at home, a ritual old as war, a necessary, essential lie. There is little doubt that the suffering here and in Vietnam will continue for a long time while the bureaucracies argue over blame. But in the cold wind blowing off the reflecting pool beyond Maya Lin's wall, you could pick your head up again; you could believe that you had finally come home.

BRUCE WEIGL

Bruce Weigl, a Vietnam War veteran, is in the English department at Old Dominion University. His latest volume of poetry, A Romance *(University of Pittsburgh Press), was published in 1979.*

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Washington, D.C.

Superstitions die hard, if they die at all. The belief that capital punishment deters homicide is a perennial. Less common but also hardy is the idea that gold represents a real store of value. (It's always gold for some reason, never any other equally rare and useless metal.) So while the Democrats indulge in premature back-slapping about the midterm elections, they might care to notice that in one of the largest states of the union they were nearly beaten by a candidate who bears, and believes in, the gold standard. And while the Republicans make light of their losses, they might reflect that, the way things are going, the gold standard may be their last supply-side alibi.

What is this thing called gold? Its fascination is well attested to by, for instance, the American Express Gold Card as a sign of status. (The fact that such a card in reality only means that you are entitled to even greater indebtedness is an example of the totemic power of the precious metal.) In the Communist future, wrote Lenin, gold would be useful solely as a raw material for the flooring of public lavatories—though there even he may have fallen an unconscious victim to the excremental imagery that seems fatally bound up with the stuff.

Gold, like politicians, is extremely malleable and extremely ductile. A single ounce of it can be beaten flat over almost half an acre (like Mondale) or drawn out to the length of several miles (like John Glenn). This versatility and general lack of principle may be another aspect of its age-old ability to mystify and enslave human beings. It can serve as an idol (the Golden Calf), as a symbol (the Golden Bough) or, most improbably, as a metaphor for moderation (the Golden Mean, Silence is Golden). What it cannot do, all hot-eyed dreams and fantasies apart, is preserve itself from dramatic fluctuations in price and demand. Every effort to raise it above the level of currency has so far failed wretchedly. Yet the illusion persists. How come?

The obsession with gold, actually and politically, occurs among those who regard economics as a branch of morality. Gold is solid, gold is durable, gold is rare, gold is even (in certain very peculiar circumstances) convertible. To believe in thrift, solidity and soundness is to believe in some way in the properties of gold. Gold is also the hallmark of kingship, privilege and nobility, which is why the gold freaks tend to adore it as an emblem of stable and grandiose hierarchy. (The two big gold-hoarding nations of the world are South Africa and the Soviet Union.) Just as the basic appeal of Reaganomics lies in its simplistic social gospel of reward and punishment and self-help and eternal values, so the hypnotic power of the gold standard stems from utopian yearnings for real, enduring value in the monetary game.

There's been an intriguing wrangle in conservative circles here lately, which is partly a result of the President's depressing lapse into tax-hiking or "revenue enhancing" or "user's fees" or whatever euphemism you will. As a distraction from the sordid business of government day by day, the right wing is again debating monetarism versus supply side. And the supply-siders are baying, as always, for the gold standard.

In a pungent little exchange in a Heritage Foundation magazine, Tim Congdon and Alan Reynolds fought it out. Congdon I know; he's a monetarist Brit who writes frequently in defense of General Pinochet. Reynolds is one of Jude Wanniski's people at Polyconomics. Congdon deployed British empiricism in an unusually convincing fashion as follows:

"The supply-siders are lucky to have discovered the gold standard gimmick, as it enables them to evade all the serious issues. By saying 'Our program will work only if the gold standard is established' they have put themselves into a position which, to the irritation of their critics, will be difficult to demonstrate as erroneous. . . . When their program—of which the centerpiece has always been the boost to the supply side from lower taxes—does not work, they will be able to say that the Administration's refusal to link the dollar to gold was responsible . . ."

Congdon argues that only a balanced budget could properly underwrite a gold standard—a cogent point but one surely lost on an Administration which believes that balanced budgets, too, can be legislated and unilaterally declared. He calls for a bold and Thatcherite stroke in the form of large tax increases to beef up the finances of the public sector. This option, though it may be taken piecemeal by Reagan, cannot be taken wholesale (or effectively) without compromising his entire economic program *and* his entire economics-as-morality incentive approach to life. Could it be that he, too, will turn out to be a gold bug?

Reynolds's objection to monetarism is pretty simple. Monetarism is based on the old quantity theory of money. But with the amazing rise of cash management, of credit facilities, of interest rates and of money market funds, the estimates of quantity on any given day are wildly different. Velocity of circulation becomes extremely hard to quantify. The Federal Reserve has about as much influence on all this as it does on the weather, and keeps changing the rules of measurement. What you cannot quantify, you cannot expect to control. The answer must be to convert dollars into gold, and vice versa, on demand at a fixed price. "Commodity money" would thus replace the present paper system.

As Ricardo put it, pleading the case for a gold standard in Britain: "The issue of paper money ought to be under some check and control; and none seems so proper for that purpose as that of subjecting the issuers of paper money to the obligation of paying their notes either in gold coin or bullion."

Somewhere in there is a confusion between "value" and "values." The Reaganites are determined to restore the one by restoring the other—or is it vice versa? Jack Kemp and Lew Lehrman are already surveying the 1980s with a Midas glint in their eyes. For them, economics is not so much a branch of morality as morality is a branch of economics. Some would say that that was capitalism for you.

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ARTICLES.

SUPERFUND AS SUPERFLOP

The E.P.A.'s Stall On Toxic Wastes

BOB DROGIN

As the head of the Environmental Protection Agency's high-priority program to clean up the nation's hazardous waste dumps, Rita M. Lavelle is in a position to know who created the thousands of befouled sites that fester like ulcers on the landscape. "You're basically dealing with illiterate workers who don't care to read," Lavelle said in a recent interview. "It's not usually the president of a company who says, 'Go hide that drum.' It's usually a worker who doesn't care, who violates company policies."

With that attitude at the top, it's not difficult to understand why Lavelle's program—known as the "Superfund," a $1.6 billion Congressional program financed largely by industry for a five-year cleanup of the nation's 400 worst dumps—is a superflop.

Under the Superfund law—the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act—the E.P.A. can force companies to clean up their own dumps. If a company is unwilling or unable, the E.P.A. can use the fund to pay for the job and then sue for up to three times the cost. The agency can authorize both emergency and long-term cleanups.

"The name of the game is to get sites cleaned up," Lavelle said in the interview. "I think we've got a heck of a track record." Indeed they do, and it is depressing. Although Lavelle said that "eight, I think, or eleven" Superfund sites have been finished, only four out of the 160 so far named to a Superfund priority list have been fully cleaned. Long-term remedial efforts are under way at only nineteen others. The E.P.A. has spent no money on three toxic waste sites in California and Michigan that are either owned or were partially created by subsidiaries of Aerojet-General, Lavelle's former employer.

Only one Superfund lawsuit has been filed. The E.P.A. has spent just $74 million of the $265 million that Congress has so far made available. The General Accounting Office is investigating to see why no office to coordinate toxic waste health studies has been established, as the Superfund law requires.

"The Superfund administration hasn't done anything of consequence," complains Representative James Florio of New Jersey, a key sponsor of the law and the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Transportation and Tourism, which oversees its implementation. "They've held three different press conferences in my state obligating the same money." Others in Washington complain of confusion and red tape. "It takes forty-nine signatures to get money just to start feasibility studies," says Hugh Kaufman, an E.P.A. hazardous site control officer who has been critical of agency policies. "There's more red tape in Superfund than in any program in the agency's history."

Lavelle rejects such criticism. She says that detailed studies are required at most sites before work can even start and that the agency is moving as quickly as possible to begin long-term cleanups. She points out that the E.P.A. has spent $26.7 million on emergency cleanups at eighty-one sites, including sixteen on the Superfund priority list. "With these emergency actions, there are no imminent hazards at this point," she told me, holding up her left hand as if taking an oath. "I can state that there's no threat right now to humans" at these 160 sites.

Florio, among many others, disagrees. "She just has a different idea of what is a hazard compared to what the statute spells out," he says angrily. "They're sort of working from a body-count theory of danger. If we have people keeling over, then there's an immediate danger."

Lavelle said her goal is to convince polluters to clean up toxic waste sites themselves, not to force them into court. "We are using more than a litigative approach," she explained. Earl Voss, her press aide, nonetheless hastened to add that the agency has filed eighty-two enforcement actions, including sixty-three lawsuits. The latter figure is misleading. All but one of the suits were filed under the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the 1972 Clean Water Act and other laws. "Only one lawsuit has been filed

DRAWINGS BY JAN SAWKA

Bob Drogin is a reporter for The Philadelphia Inquirer.

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under Superfund," says Pete Rosenburg, an E.P.A. waste programs enforcement officer.

Lavelle told me most companies cooperate in cleaning up Superfund sites. "We are able to go to industry, talk across the table and reach a mutually agreed-upon solution," she said. Voss happily pulled out a file card to show that companies have contributed $82 million for cleanups at eighty-two sites. Those figures are also misleading. Most of the settlements were not arranged under Superfund. Only $10.7 million has been paid by industries for cleanups at ten Superfund sites, Rosenburg says. And only $110,000 has been recovered for the fund in the courts.

Most of the $74 million the Superfund has spent in the last two years has been for research, salaries and overhead—not cleanups. Lavelle had repeatedly pledged that the agency would sign contracts to spend the full $265 million Congress appropriated so no money would revert to the Treasury. It didn't work out that way, however; by September 30, the last day of the fiscal year, the agency had signed contracts for only $202 million, more than a fourth of which was obligated in the last month.

This sluggish activity isn't surprising, considering Lavelle's background. Before joining the E.P.A. she was director of communications for the Aerojet Liquid Rocket Company, an Aerojet-General subsidiary in Sacramento, California. Before that she held a similar job at the Cordova Chemical Company, another Aerojet-General subsidiary. She also worked in 1969 as a press aide for Ronald Reagan, then Governor of California, and became friends with Ed Meese, now Reagan's key White House aide.

Lavelle first visited the E.P.A. in October 1981 to find out why Aerojet's plant in Rancho Cordova, California, was listed as one of the worst Superfund sites. E.P.A. Administrator Anne Gorsuch hired her to run the program instead. "If anything, my experience at Aerojet has been a definite plus in running this job," Lavelle said. "It was an excellent training ground for this job. Aerojet, I think, was an exemplary company."

Exemplary, perhaps, but in a peculiar way. Of Aerojet's three Superfund sites, the most dangerous is in Rancho Cordova, a Sacramento suburb where Cordova Chemical dumped large quantities of rocket propellant, herbicides, solvents and other hazardous wastes beginning in 1953, according to state and Federal officials. The state closed at least nineteen wells in the area in 1979 and 1980 after tests showed high levels of trichloroethylene, or TCE, a suspected carcinogen. The state found the company in violation of its water-discharge permit and has sued to force a cleanup. The case is pending. Aerojet spokesman Tom Sprague said Cordova has begun a pilot project to remove the TCE, but he declined to answer questions about the lawsuit. "We're in the process of cleaning up ourselves," Sprague said. "We're doing what we feel is right."

The E.P.A. has also identified Aerojet as one of about 190 companies that dumped 32 million gallons of acid waste into the Stringfellow Quarry in Riverside, California, polluting a large aquifer. California has asked the agency for $6.1 million to clean that up.

The third Aerojet Superfund site is in Muskegon, Michigan. In 1978, Lavelle helped Cordova obtain permits to manufacture chemicals on a site that had been polluted by the Ott-Story Chemical Company, which had gone bankrupt. State officials say the Ott-Story wastes, which have poisoned a nearby aquifer and threaten part of Lake Michigan, may cost $40 million to clean up.

Lavelle, 35, is a short, stocky woman with light blond hair, bright red fingernails and an easy smile. She has a pleasant laugh. But she is not the kind of person who takes criticism lightly. Ask Hugh Kaufman, the E.P.A.'s most vocal in-house critic.

Documents Kaufman obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that Lavelle asked E.P.A. Inspector General Matthew Novick to investigate him last April, shortly after Kaufman had testified before Florio's subcommittee about the sabotage of Superfund. Lavelle "wants to fire him," one E.P.A. investigator wrote in his notes. Another, Rick Walsh, trailed Kaufman for two days during a visit on his own time to a citizens' group in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and photographed him at the meeting and entering a hotel with "an attractive brunette." Kaufman says the woman was his wife, Elana, and he intends to sue. "They're very paranoid," he says. "They spend more time worrying about me than hazardous waste."

Lavelle denies she wants to fire Kaufman. The inspector general's office refuses to comment. But the E.P.A. is clearly nervous about the publicity and access to its files. On August 27, James J. Conn Jr., divisional inspector general of the E.P.A.'s mid-Atlantic region, wrote a memorandum entitled "Talking Paper on How and When to Purge Divisional Case Files of Material Which Could Prove Embarrassing if Released Under an FOIA or Congressional Request." As soon as a case is completed, "we have to start thinking about what to get rid of before an FOIA request catches us with our pants down," Conn wrote. "We can no longer tuck materials in our desks and private workpaper files and hope to exempt them from disclosure."

Lavelle told me she has made mistakes, but "no critical ones," since taking office eight months ago. "I took this job because I wanted to show what good management can do to solve a problem," she said. "The results are coming in and will continue to come in." No doubt. So far, however, they are more frightening than encouraging. □

FRONT PAGE AWARD

The 1982 Front Page Awards, issued annually by the Newswomen's Club of New York, have just been announced. We are pleased to report that the award in the magazine category for best "criticism or column" was won by Literary Editor Katha Pollitt for her lead review of Eileen Simpson's *Poets in Their Youth* in our June 19 issue.

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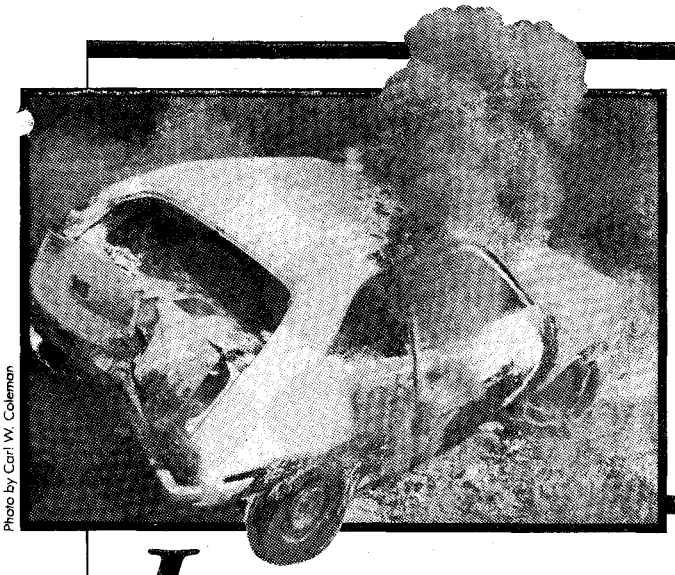

Photo by Carl W. Coleman

In 1977, We Told You Ford Pintos Had A Problem.

In 1980, We Told You That America Had A Problem.

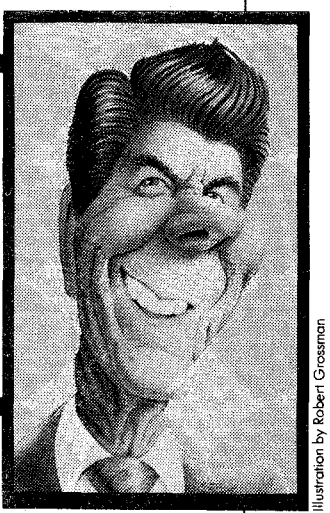

Illustration by Robert Grossman

Two stories couldn't be more different: In 1977, our story on the Ford Pinto uncovered a history of corporate irresponsibility. In 1980, our story on candidate Ronald Reagan accurately predicted the State of the Union a year in advance.

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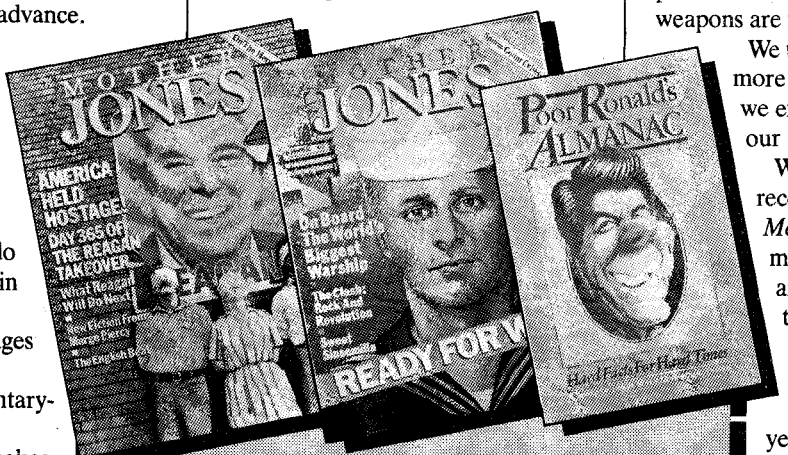

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LETTER FROM EUROPE

'Solidarity Will Never Die'

DANIEL SINGER

Paris

If Polish law supposes that a huge social movement can be voted out of existence, then, as Mr. Bumble put it, "the law is a ass, a idiot." No sooner had the Polish Parliament passed its new trade union law, designed primarily to ban Solidarity, than the underground leaders of the movement called for a nationwide strike on November 10.

As it happened, the strike was less than a success, in large part because an underground movement is unable to paralyze a country controlled by soldiers. But it did, in a roundabout way, achieve the release of Lech Walesa after eleven months of internment, and that is important in itself. It was on the eve of the nationwide strike that the Catholic Church, perhaps fearful of bloodshed, came to an agreement with martial law authorities, in effect bargaining for the liberation of Walesa by attempting to sell out Solidarity.

The deal did not quite go as planned. After his release, it took Walesa a couple of days to get to his home in Gdansk. A taped television interview with him was made and publicized but never released by the Polish authorities. In the public statements he did make, he did not sound like a corporal addressing his general but an independent and reasonable labor leader speaking on behalf of the Polish working class.

Given the present political stalemate, this man, armed with just his voice, still matters. The military may control, but it does not have any success in wooing the workers, as shown by the dearth of volunteers for the government's proposed new unions. Walesa does, and hence his significance, now and in the foreseeable future.

Solidarity, under whatever name, is thus very far from finished. All that the ban accomplished was to make it easier to get rid of some of the fashionable distortions surrounding its struggle and to perceive that struggle with a new clarity. Fundamentally it is a conflict between rulers who, to preserve their absolute power, must not only break the labor movement but in some Orwellian fashion deprive it of its collective memory and a working class which, in trying to defend its conquests, is really defending the paramount interests of the society at large.

* * *

The new trade union law is hardly significant in itself, though if the labor movement had not previously made such tremendous strides some of its provisions might have aroused interest. After all, it does provide that new unions will be theoretically independent of the party and the government and will have the right to strike. But that right, like most others, is so circumscribed by provisions for advance warnings and compulsory arbitration and jurisdictional restrictions that it remains rather empty. The law even goes so far as to forbid any industrywide organizing until 1984 and any Solidarity-like association among unions until 1985.

The enactment of the law was important for other reasons. It was an ostentatious signal of the authorities' refusal to compromise and an open display of their political power. In the handpicked Sejm, or Parliament, only 12 out of 460 deputies dared vote against it, and 9 abstained. Among the dissenters, the most notable was Jan Szczepanski, a prominent sociologist who has hovered for some time on the liberal fringes of the Polish establishment. As late as last December, as a member of the Council of State, he contributed his signature to the document that provided a legal cloak for the military coup. Like a surprising number of Western liberals, he was still giving General Jaruzelski the benefit of the doubt. Through his vote he has now admitted he was utterly wrong.

Why did the authorities show their hand so plainly? The answer comes from Mieczyslaw Rakowski, a deputy prime minister. He, too, once had a liberal reputation as the editor of the weekly *Polityka*, but has since become the most aggressive spokesman for the junta. Speaking on the eve of the parliamentary debate, he said that the government had originally intended to revive Solidarity on the assumption that its leadership would be reasonable—or, in other words, that, defeated by the military, the union would accept a subordinate role. (Rakowski put it more eloquently: the rulers had thought that "the mass membership of Solidarity would isolate the extremists and that realists would gain the upper hand in the leading organs of the organization.") That assumption was mistaken, so the military had to ban Solidarity outright.

* * *

That Solidarity moved too far and too fast is a refrain one has heard often from Poland's authorities and their Western defenders. It is usually coupled with the line proferred by Rakowski: reasonable, moderate workers were led astray by reckless leaders. The leadership of Solidarity may be accused of all sorts of things, including the lack of a clear purpose, but no one could honestly describe the sixteen months following the Gdansk agreements as a period when the mass of workers was begging for peace and quiet and its leaders were spoiling for a fight. Quite the contrary.

The latest version of this refrain is equally off base. It suggests that, driven underground, the leadership of Solidarity has lost touch with reality, imagining the workers are in the same fighting mood it is in, whereas really they are weary of protest and eager to get back to normal. In fact, when Solidarity was officially outlawed in October its underground leaders argued about the best response; some even wondered whether it would be possible to take over the new government-approved unions from within. Eventually Solidarity chose to boycott the new organizations and stage

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s European correspondent.*

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a protest strike, but it set the date a month away, partly to have time for preparations, partly in the hope the government would change its mind and offer concessions. Some "fighting mood."

Far from dragging their feet, the workers actually jumped the gun. Just after Solidarity was banned, at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk workers went out on a two-day strike, ended only after the "militarization" of the yard placed the employees under army discipline. Protest strikes were staged in most industrial centers, including the Szczecin shipyard and the Cegielski engineering works in Poznan. There were strikes and demonstrations in Wroclaw, the capital of Lower Silesia, and in the steel town of Nowa Huta wild street-fighting between protesters and police ended with one 20-year-old worker fatally shot. Some "weary of protest."

The violent clashes in Nowa Huta had symbolic importance because it was originally thought of as a proletarian showpiece of the Communist regime. It is a gray, drab town, erected on the site of two small villages near Crakow as a home for the huge Lenin steelworks. It was there that Birkut built houses in the early parts of Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble*.

It was there, too, that a quarter of a century ago I thought I had grasped the meaning of Soviet "primitive accumulation." Peasants, uprooted, had been transplanted at the new site, turning it into an undisciplined boomtown like something out of the Wild West. The purpose was break-neck industrialization, which, once accomplished, was supposed to bring about prosperity and freedom. It turned out otherwise. In their working classes the Soviet-style regimes of Eastern Europe have, in the Marxist phrase, produced their own gravediggers.

* * *

The social weight of the Polish working class has been building up for at least a dozen years, ever since the winter of 1970-71, when workers won with their own blood the right to reject proposed increases in food prices. Ten years later workers established the right to create an autonomous labor organization.

Last December the rulers opted for military dictatorship as a way to reduce this weight. Since then they have discovered that, even defeated, the workers will not give up. Hence the attempted exorcism of Solidarity and now, because that won't work, a new operation: a Moscow-style trial, the trial of Jacek Kuron and three of his colleagues from the Committee for the Defense of the Workers, known as KOR.

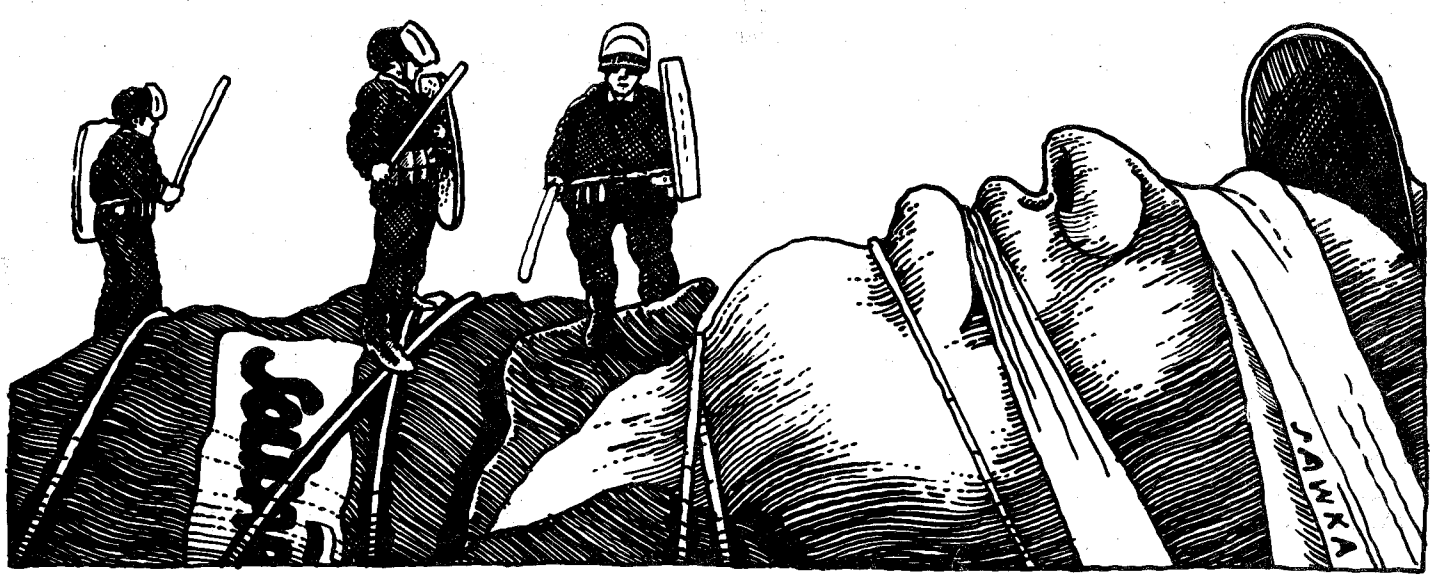
KOR was begun in 1976 when a handful of intellectuals banded together to provide legal and financial aid to workers suffering from a ruthless backlash of repression after a successful strike. This was a new kind of worker-intellectual link in Poland, but it was eventually able to force the government to release all the workers from prison within a year. KOR went on encouraging resistance through lectures and publications, and in *Robotnik* (Worker) did much to spread the idea of an autonomous, free labor union. More generally, KOR inaugurated a new chapter in the relations between workers and intellectuals throughout Eastern Europe.

Once Solidarity was born, the members of KOR took an active part in the movement, though without any common line. They disbanded their organization just over a year ago, arguing that a group set up to defend the workers had no reason to exist when a powerful labor movement was protecting everybody. It was an argument tragically contradicted by the military coup.

It is impossible, of course, to have a real Moscow-style trial in Poland today: nobody would believe it, and Kuron and company are not men to play the appointed parts. But in its hopeless effort to break the labor movement, to split Solidarity into jailed "extremists" and obedient sheep, the military has to drive on and on along the road of repression. Historically, it is a road to disaster.

* * *

The historical weakness of the government does not insure the present strength of the movement. The Gdansk strikers, compelled to go back to work so as to avoid the full blasts of martial law, illustrate Solidarity's dilemma. On the one hand, it is now perfectly aware, as it was not during the heady summer of 1980, that the government is prepared to



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use force if it has to. Behind the ZOMO (riot squads) stands the Polish Army and behind that the Soviet tanks. Some caution is made necessary too by the isolation of being underground and the difficulty of communicating and establishing contacts.

On the other hand, if it is too cautious, Solidarity risks losing workers to the new unions, which if nothing else will be channels for welfare. Recommending go-slow tactics to people who need higher earnings to meet rising prices is also not likely to sit well. Will Solidarity be able to keep young workers in check when hope turns to hatred? Will it be able to wrest concessions from the rulers when its avowed aim is not to crush them but to bring them to the bargaining table?

It would be convenient for many if, dead and buried, Solidarity were to recede into the past. The men in the Kremlin could, at least for a time, stop bothering about "contagion" throughout the Soviet bloc, and the likes of Rakowski could preach once again that the Communist Party's puppet unions are the true representatives of the working class. In the West, Reagan and Thatcher could escape the irony of criticizing the Polish government for taking much the same measures against unions there as they have used in their own countries.

But Solidarity refuses to oblige. The Polish proletariat has no manners: it is quite capable of rising up after the funeral orations have been delivered. Or, as the mourners of Nowa Huta wrote on their banners: "Solidarity will never die." □

ALONG THE MEXICAN BORDER

Two Cultures, Two Extinctions

VICTOR PERERA

One week after 150 Mayan men, women and children are massacred by the Guatemalan Army in a remote highland village, a surviving family of seven steals across the Mexican border into the mahogany forest of Chiapas. The seven—who like tens of thousands of other refugee families carry on their backs all their worldly goods and a few sacks of beans and dried corn—are spotted by the Mexican border patrol and returned to almost certain death at the hands of the Guatemalan military, which had targeted their village for extermination as "Communist-infested."

Not far away, a long-haired, white-gowned Lacandon youth, out on his regular hunt for deer and wild boar, witnesses this scene. In contrast to the Guatemalan Indians, his people in the lowland jungles have the protection of the Mexican government—which has nonetheless bulldozed several hundred of the mahogany trees that are a crucial part of the cultural and ecological life of his fellow villagers. After watching the capture of the refugees, curious but unmoved, the youth shoulders his old-fashioned .22 rifle and continues on his way.

Two cultures, two extinctions. Scenes like this are being enacted several times a week along the Mexican-Guatemalan border, as two proud aboriginal peoples linked by a common Mayan ancestry are being separately extirpated. The mass murders of the Quichés, Kakchiqueles and other highland tribes are almost unimaginably brutal, whereas the asphyxiation of the lowland Lacandones is comparatively gentle. But the results are equally thorough.

The operating principle of Guatemala's military government, which overthrew strongman Romeo Lucas García last March, appears to be a functional schizophrenia. By presenting a facade of reasonableness and moderation and giving lip service to social and economic reforms, President Efraín Rios Montt can carry on and even accelerate the brutal anti-insurgency operations of the previous regime. By going easy on prominent politicians and intellectuals and restoring "business as usual" in the capital, the military can pursue the murder of peasant populations in the countryside, away from the glare of publicity. A recent refinement is the training and outfitting of *campesino* "militias" to slaughter their own brothers and sisters, which enables the army to appear a blameless bystander to a civil conflict.

It took a dramatic gesture by thirteen *campesino* members of the leftist Committee for Peasant Unity to break through the government's news blackout on the carnage in the highlands. Last May they seized the Brazilian Embassy in Guatemala City and announced to the world that the army had killed 3,000 of their neighbors and destroyed the villagers' homes and fields.

All thirteen were granted political asylum in Mexico City, where in an interview this September their leader, a 27-year-old named Domingo Hernando Ixcoi, spoke of the growing guerrilla movement. "There are now close to 400,000 *campesinos* active in the movement or living in guerrilla-organized villages," he claimed. "The real slaughter by the army is taking place in the villages that have not organized.

"We are no longer afraid of them," Domingo asserted. "They have killed our parents, our brothers and our sisters, and they have burned our homes and our cornfields. What more can they do to us?"

Apparently more of the same. In early October 3,000 to 3,500 Indians in flight from the army were rounded up in the region of San Martín Jilotepeque, and 300 of them were executed. Another 60 or 70 were killed near the village of Las Lomas, and some 200 more were killed in the villages of San José and Santa Anita Las Canoas. The Guatemalan government has turned a deaf ear to charges from international human rights groups—and from the Dutch and Peruvian delegations at the United Nations—that the army is massacring large numbers of noncombatant Indians. As to charges that tens of thousands of others have been rounded up in Vietnam-style "strategic hamlets," government spokesmen have cynically insisted that the *campesinos* were

Victor Perera is co-author with Robert Bruce of The Last Lords of Palenque: The Lacandon Mayas of the Mexican Rain Forest *(Little, Brown).*

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in reality seeking army protection from the guerrillas.

President Rios Montt is a born-again evangelist and a man of vociferous good intentions, and he has even appointed a makeshift Human Rights Commission in an attempt to take that issue away from his adversaries. But moderate leftist organizations as well as guerrilla spokesmen claim that he is continuing Lucas García's repression behind a cosmetic face lift. They point to his role as an anti-insurgency specialist in Col. Arana Osorio's "pacification campaign" in the late 1960s, during which an estimated 10,000 *campesinos* were killed over three years.

Rios Montt's offer of amnesty last June was spurned by the guerrillas, who regarded it as a ruse to grant a blanket pardon to Lucas García's secret police and special army units. On July 1, Rios Montt declared a thirty-day state of siege to root out the guerrillas, suspending most civil liberties and banning all political activity. "We are in a state of permanent war," he announced. During the state of siege, which has been renewed and is still in effect, all reports on military and guerrilla actions that appear in the local press originate in the president's office.

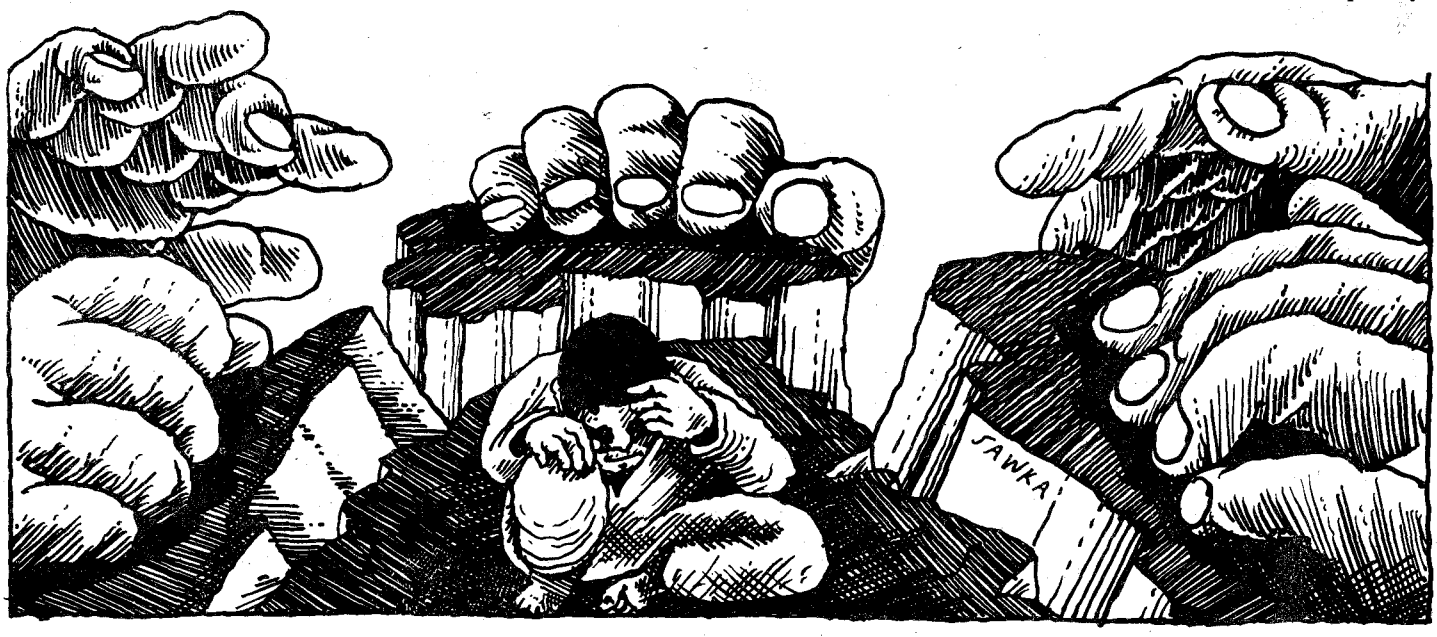
Rios Montt's evangelism has not set him apart from previous presidents in another respect: his profound disregard for the Indians and his determination to pursue a program of virtual ethnic extermination in order to wipe out the guerrillas' base of support in the highlands. Contempt for the Indians is bred into soldiers from the day they enter the army, and it is inculcated as part of officer training in Guatemala's military academy. Since the officer class is composed largely of *mestizos*, its hatred of the Indians is rooted in a sadistic self-revulsion that was captured brilliantly by Nobel laureate Miguel Angel Asturias in his novel *El Señor Presidente*.

The one exception to the rule of Indiophobic military presidents was socialist Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, who was overthrown with C.I.A. collusion in 1954 chiefly because he had confiscated tracts of fallow land owned by the United Fruit Company, which he paid for with government bonds and parceled out to landless peasants. Today, as a State Department official has admitted, Arbenz's land-reform program would make him an acceptable leader in Washington's eyes.

The Guatemalan military's contempt for the Indians, however, has never placed it at a disadvantage in Washington, and much less so today. It is increasingly apparent that the Reagan Administration intends to resume large-scale military aid to Guatemala. After all, if Reagan evinces so little compassion for the poor and disadvantaged at home, how can he be expected to comprehend the desperate plight of those in a small and underdeveloped Central American republic?

A quite different sort of duplicity is being perpetrated by the Mexican government on one of its best-known aboriginal communities, the Lacandon Mayas. During the election campaign earlier this year, the ruling party's candidates for the presidency and the local governorship made pilgrimages to the forest homes of the Lacandones, embracing them and soliciting their endorsements. The 400 or so surviving Lacandones, believed to be the last pure-blooded descendants of the ancient Mayas, are known to generate good publicity. No recent candidate for president has passed up the opportunity to have himself photographed next to the octogenarian patriarch, Chan K'in, so as to project himself to the media as capable of being "president of *all* the people."

Behind the official attentions, however, the despoiling of the rain forest by the Mexican Forestry Department continues, as bulldozers cut roads and pull down the centenarian mahogany trees that hold together the Lacandon community as well as the ecological stability of its environment. Before the loggers came, Chan K'in taught his three wives and many children that the roots of all living things are connected, so that when a mighty tree is felled in the forest, a star falls from the sky: "That is why, before cutting down a mahogany, you must ask permission of the guardian of the forest and the guardian of the stars." In contemporary



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terms, Chan K'in is teaching the simple truth that when you tamper with the roots of a rich but fragile ecosystem such as the rain forest, you endanger all the others.

In addition to the bulldozers, oil rigs have begun exploratory drilling in Pico de Oro, which is on the edge of the 2,400-square-mile Lacandon preserve. It is only a matter of time before the black gold will be pumped up from beneath the forest floor.

In return for this exploitation, the Lacandones have been given clinics and schools. The northern settlement of Nahá, with a little more than 100 inhabitants, has already bought three trucks with the revenue from its mahogany trees, and it won't be long before every Lacandon will own a tape recorder or radio. More and more government dignitaries will pay regular visits to the modernized settlements, along with the regular planeloads of American, German and French tourists.

Unlike the highland Mayas of Guatemala, the Lacandones are being suffocated by government largesse, even as their forest is decimated and their sacred ceremonies are profaned by tourists and bureaucrats. Like many other aboriginal peoples before them, they are becoming a kind of official mascot, with a built-in public relations value.

If, as seems likely, the atrocities against the Mayas of Guatemala continue to mount and the Lacandones continue to be patronized and exploited out of their 4,000-year-old ethnic heritage, then the 1980s may well be remembered by future generations as having marked the extinction of the remnants of one of the great ancient civilizations to have flourished in our hemisphere. □

Vietnam Vets

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

And yet, having said that, one must say something more. It would be unfortunate for us all, including the veterans, if the memorial had the effect of closing the door on the past or trying to heal the wounds left behind—as if, in the words of a veteran I met recently, "everything was all right now, all hunky-dory, we're all friends again and all that shit, and the war itself will be forgotten." For we have not, as a people, really come to terms with the moral questions raised by the war or understood the lessons it ought to have taught us. And we have not begun to come to terms with what the vets are only now, as the war gradually recedes into the past, beginning to learn about themselves and can perhaps teach the rest of us.

That is why it seems to me important not to worry too much about the memorial's design, nor even to concentrate on the horrors of war and the plight of the vets, but rather to reflect upon the knowledge and wisdom that at least a few men have begun in private to mine from the war. I cannot speak here about all vets, or even most of them, so I will concentrate on the men I met this September in Rochester at the first New York State convention of the Vietnam Veterans of America, which I was invited to attend because of what I had previously written about veterans. Technically, what I have to say applies only to the 300 or so vets at the convention, and obviously it is not true of all vets. The V.V.A. as an organization is rather radical, or at least its leaders and several of its chapters are, but even among its members there are many different attitudes toward the past: many of the men are antiwar and antigovernment, but many others believe (or try to believe) that the war was necessary and just and their own roles justifiable. Yet whatever their differences, they have certain characteristics in common; and I have met enough other vets to know that there must be countless others like them scattered across the country, and that what I saw in Rochester must be going on elsewhere.

What impresses me most about the vets I know is the sensibility that has emerged among them in recent years: a particular kind of moral seriousness which is unusual in America, one which is deepened and defined by the fact that it has emerged from a direct confrontation not only with the capacity of others for violence and brutality but also with their own culpability, their sense of their own capacity for error and excess. Precisely the same kinds of experiences that have produced in some vets the complex constellations of panic from which they seem unable to recover have engendered in others an awareness of moral complexity and human tragedy unlike anything one is likely to find elsewhere in America today.

It is this underlying seriousness, I think, that accounts, among other effects, for the ways these veterans treat one another. Whatever their behavior—and it is often skeptical, joking, an affectionate roughhousing—there remains an undercurrent of easygoing and generous concern, or care, or what one might even call (how one hesitates to use the word) love.

I remember two instances of it in particular. The first was a talk given by Gary Beikirch, a Medal of Honor winner who is now president of the Genesee Valley V.V.A. chapter. He described his sense of isolation and humiliation in the years after the war, somehow intensified by the medal he had gotten (so much for the dream that "appreciation" will make the vets feel better). And then he talked about what it had been like to make tentative contact with the vets in the Rochester group and to discover among them the camaraderie he needed. What he described was a kind of healing similar to that which some vets in outreach programs and "rap" groups have provided for one another.

The second occasion was the appearance, at the start of the final night's dinner, of a black vet who had apparently walked in off the street uninvited with his wife and child in tow. He made his way to the microphone and, while brandishing a baseball bat, began to speak: "I ain't here to make trouble, I don't wanna *have* any trouble, but I gotta tell you, I need help. I got a wife, a kid, I got no job, I don't belong anywhere, there's no one will give me any help. . . ." The vets to a man had been tensed for trouble, but now, suddenly, two or three came up to him and led him to a table

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and invited his wife and child to join them, and he became part of their group. And at the microphone Bobby Muller, the national V.V.A. head, whose turn it was to speak, smiled and said from his wheelchair: "Listen, bro, you're gonna come to our big convention next year in Washington, you hear me? But that's a big one, so bring more than a baseball bat. You'll need your heavy artillery."

These are vets who have, quite literally, brought one another back from the dead, often saved one another from suicide. Their relationships are full of a tenderness and generosity that is rare among American men—at least in public. (Sometimes they themselves are blissfully unaware of it; at others, when they notice it, they seem astonished.) I cannot remember seeing anything like it save among black college students in the late 1960s or among civil rights workers and elderly blacks in the South or—oddly enough—among the members of a fraternity to which I belonged in the 1950s, who seemed, beyond all rhetoric, to be genuinely brotherly toward one another.

It is this capacity for generosity, this kind of learned concern, which colors their moral sensibility, as if there were still at work in them a moral yearning or innocence that had somehow been deepened, rather than destroyed, by the war. A few days after I came home from my stay with the vets, a friend asked me: "Well, what is it they really want?" And I said, without thinking, "Justice." That is what they want, but it is not justice for themselves—though they would like that too. They simply want justice to *exist*, for there to be justice in the world: some moral order, a moral order maintained by other men and women one can trust. Their yearning is made all the more poignant by the fact that they still do not understand that if justice is to exist, they will have to be the ones who *create* rather than receive it. They do not yet—not *yet*—see it as their own work, not because they are lazy, but simply because it is not a role they associate with themselves. Like most Americans, they do not have a sense of themselves as makers and sustainers of moral values, even though, without knowing it, that is what many of them have become.

I remember how, at the closing banquet, the vets rose and applauded each speaker, moved by the sentiments they heard. There came a moment when a former South Vietnamese major, attending the convention uninvited, came up to the dais to offer a plaque to Gary Beikirch. He said that someday the vets would have to return to Vietnam to finish the job they had started but had been forced to stop. Without thinking, on cue, the whole room stood and applauded, the vets and their wives and friends and guests. Yet it was obviously not a sentiment most of them really shared, and later they laughed sheepishly about their enthusiasm. What it revealed was how susceptible the vets are—as, in a sense we all are—to rhetoric and ritual and what the moment seems to demand. It is, paradoxically, the vets' yearning for goodness, for something to believe, which fuels their desire for justice but also makes them vulnerable to rhetoric and ritual, just as it did long ago when they went off to war.

One must remember: these were the good children. Several of them had fathers who served in World War II and passed on to them a sense of obligation and a belief in the glory of war. Many others—a surprising number, in fact—were Catholics who were inspired at an early age by John Kennedy's call to "ask what you can do for your country"; in fighting Communism (one must not forget how rigorously at the time American Catholicism was intent on confronting Communism everywhere), they would satisfy not only their parents, teachers and priests but also God and the Pope and the President—all at once. They were, in short, those whose faith in their elders, and in American myths and the American order of things, was so strong, so innocent, that war seemed beyond all doubt a good thing, a form of virtue.

And largely because their belief was so strong at the start—not only in the war but in all authority—their disillusionment and subsequent sense of loss were much stronger. One is tempted to call this an "orphan effect." They were cut off from any sustaining world. Church, state, parents, politicians, Army officers—all the hierarchical sources of moral truth and authority dissolved around them during the war, leaving them exposed without consolation to the stark facts of human culpability and brutality. I remember a remark I heard a vet make a year or two ago. He had said that he wondered if the Vietnamese people would ever forgive him for what he did. When someone asked whether he worried about God forgiving him, he answered, "*My* problem is that I haven't yet learned how to forgive *God*."

When I am asked, as I often am, why the Vietnam War so much affected—and so adversely affected—these young men, I am always surprised by the question, because the answers seem to me so obvious.

In the first place, it is probable that all wars have devas-

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tating effects upon the men they use—and these were not men when they fought but adolescents, averaging just about 19 years of age. It is hard to believe that something similar to what the soldiers in Vietnam felt was not felt by the men involved in the pointless horrors of trench warfare in World War I; and I cannot help thinking about what one vet told me in Rochester about his father and World War II:

"He never talked much about it except for the usual glorious things, about service to the country and becoming a man. But every year, on New Year's Day, he would lock himself into his den and get dead drunk. He never explained why he did it, but I think now he was remembering the war and mourning. Once, just once, after I got back from Nam, he asked me what it was like, and then he began talking about his war and what he had seen and how it had felt, the killing and the death, and he didn't really feel very much different about it than I did about Nam. It was simply that he had kept it to himself."

For another thing, although what happened to many men in Vietnam did happen to other men in other wars, the cumulative psychological effects were much greater. War, to be sure, is hell, but the effects of this one were compounded by its specific characteristics, as witnessed by the fact that a higher percentage of veterans emerged from this war with psychological disturbances than, as far as we know, from any previous war. (Without question, the rate of suicide and attempted suicide is higher among Vietnam vets than among those of other wars.) Moreover, the attention paid to the damages wrought upon the veterans by this war has been much greater than in the past.

There are other elements that make the Vietnam War different from and even worse than other wars. Even now most Americans do not realize the extent to which it was marked by arbitrary killing and the murder of civilians—out of either official policy or the casual, recreational or simply half-mad behavior of individual men apparently subject to neither internal nor external constraint. It was a war in which innocents became fair game and in which our soldiers—who went to war convinced they were saviors and guardians of freedom—found themselves perceived by the civilian population as intruders, conquerers and even murderers. Their military leaders at several levels of command proved to be venal, dishonest or stupid, and everywhere around them flourished forms of American corruption and vice—black-marketeering, profiteering, thievery—which most of them had never seen close up before. It was a bad war fought for all the wrong reasons and in all the wrong ways, and one could hardly avoid seeing that after being in it for a short while. All of the death, and all of the risk, and even all of the camaraderie and bravery that mark the lives of soldiers anywhere, even those engaged in wrong causes—all of that was rendered meaningless and unnecessary because the war itself was so obviously a bad one.

And there is, finally, one other reason for the Vietnam vets' special pain: we have, as a people, and largely without knowing it, shifted our attitudes toward war, outgrowing the ease with which we may once have accepted violence. Cultures *do* grow up; just as certain moral attitudes can atrophy, others can develop. Many Americans are no longer able to accept without question or horror the nature of war; indeed, it may well be that in future wars (save for the most obviously self-defensive) many combatants will feel, afterward, what the vets now feel about Vietnam. In short, the vets may be experiencing, as their *individual* pain, the half-conscious tensions and confusions that Americans, as a society, now bring to violence and war.

Therefore, more than veterans of any other wars past, what these men have been forced to confront is *their own capacity for error*; they understand that whatever they experienced—the horror, the terror—has its roots and complements in their own weaknesses and mistakes. For them, all conversation about human error or evil is a conversation about themselves; they are pushed past smug ideology and the condemnation of others to an examination of the world that is an examination of self. They know there is no easy relation between one's self-image and the consequences of one's actions. They know too that whatever truths one holds at any given moment will turn out to be if not mistaken then at least incomplete, and that often one's opponents or antagonists will turn out to have been more right than one thought and probably as serious in intention as oneself. Because they cannot easily divide the world into two camps, and because they cannot easily claim virtue while ascribing evil to others, they inhabit a moral realm more complex than the one in which most others live. They know that a moral life means an acknowledgment of guilt as well as a claim to virtue, and they have learned—oh, hardest lesson of all—to judge their own actions in terms of their irrevocable consequences to others.

This sense of moral complexity seems to me to put to shame much of the rhetoric and ethical carelessness that marks America's political life. On both the left and the right, there is a puritanical zealousness attached to almost every position, a moral provincialism in the midst of which people become magically assured of their own virtue and their opponents' culpability and knavery, no matter what the issue or how complicated the questions involved. It hardly matters whether one is speaking to a conservative who favors abortion or a liberal who opposes it, to a proponent of nuclear energy or someone against it. People seem to believe beyond all question that they speak somehow for God and Truth, and that anyone who holds a different view is not only wrong but also less humane, less human, allied with the Devil. Moral hysteria and smugness triumph on every side; Jane Fonda's liberal heroines in film after film are as hollowly virtuous, as unmitigatedly pure, as John Wayne's heroes ever were. The complexities and ironies of truth and half-truth and the ambiguities of moral experience are crushed under the weight of assurance and attitudinizing. One has the feeling that the Jacobins reign supreme and that one's own side, in power, would be no more humane or generous than the side to which it is opposed.

Not so with the vets—that is what I love about them.

But this moral depth, this seriousness, may well go to waste—that is what is most poignant about it. The vets for

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the most part remain so isolated, so locked into their own pain, that there are few avenues for what is within them to make its way into the larger world, or be sustained and refined by the larger world. If someone somewhere would take the trouble to draw forth from the veterans what it is they feel, think and know, or to convince them to speak, all of us would be better off.

It is probably true, as Karl Jaspers pointed out almost four decades ago in talking to the German people about guilt, that people can look closely at their own moral guilt only when others around them are willing to consider *their* lives in the same way. This is precisely what the vets have been denied, and therefore their seriousness—which ought to afford them entrance into the larger world, connecting them to all those others who have thought about and suffered similar things—does not. They cannot locate men or women willing to take them as seriously as they take the questions that plague them.

That is what seems so wasteful, and there is something almost unforgivable about it. I have seen similar kinds of waste over and over in America during the past several decades: among children, whose sense of community and fair play is allowed to atrophy or is conscientiously discouraged; in universities, where the best and deepest yearnings of students go unacknowledged or untapped; even in literature, where, with very few exceptions, the capacities for generosity and concern which abound unrecognized in most men and women have gone unexamined. But for this to happen to the vets is perhaps the greatest waste of all, since, in many of them, so much understanding has so obviously emerged from their experience.

What astonishes me is that this situation is being ignored by the American intellectual community, even by those whose resistance to the war was based on moral principles and doubts. The quandaries of the vets, and their pain—a pain they bear for the rest of the nation that now refuses to confront it—certainly demand the attention of intelligent men and women. And their quandaries and pain also provide the best subject I know—the most real, the most immediate—for the kind of moral speculation and self-investigation one would have expected to see in the wake of the war.

But most of the intellectuals concerned with the war have largely ignored the vets; Robert Jay Lifton and Gloria Emerson are the only intellectuals I know who have made the effort to contact them directly and help them think through their condition. And effort is what it takes, because the lines between American castes are so clearly drawn, and our acquiescence to them so nearly complete, that there is no natural way for vets and intellectuals to come together. There is, in effect, a set of social pass-book laws at work—not overt, of course, but implicit, so deeply internalized and so much taken for granted that we never notice it.

Friends tell me that the vets are probably better off because of this, since most intellectuals are so limited in understanding and generosity. Perhaps that is true; it may well be that the intellectuals I am talking about exist only in my mind. Still, as limited as the intellectual world may be,

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there are people within it whose intelligence and understanding of moral issues would, if coupled with generosity and compassion, be of immense use to the vets. Robert Coles is one, for instance, and Arthur Miller, John Seeley and I.F. Stone are others. A few hours with any one of these men might save some vets months and months of agonizing.

The fact that such contacts are not often made results in a double loss. The first loss is to the vets themselves. I often find myself telling them that they are not likely to find anywhere the kinds of help they want or need, and that whatever moral wisdom America gains from the war will result from their efforts and theirs alone. But the fact that I tell them they must do it on their own does not mean that I believe they will be able to do it. Without someone to listen to them, many vets may not accept their right or responsibility to speak openly about moral questions.

Gloria Emerson points out that the vets are hampered in this regard as much by their sense of class as by anything else, and she is probably right. Most vets went into the Army right out of high school and were not the kids who would have gone to college—not the "good" colleges, anyway. They were taught by American institutions to remain mute, to refrain from turning into words what they know or feel. They have, still, in relation to "experts" and intellectuals and academics the odd combination of disdain and exaggerated awe that they had in the Army in relation to authority. They were schooled systematically to doubt the authenticity of their own perceptions and sensibilities; they do not think they have the right to speak; they do not know the tricks of the intellectual and public trades; and they do not think that what they say will make much difference.

Most important, the vets lack, because they cannot reach those who might provide it, a *context* for what they feel. They have little sense of the ways in which their suffering is like the suffering of others, so they feel more separated and idiosyncratic than they really are. What many of the vets felt when they returned from Vietnam, for instance, was different in intensity but not in kind from what many returning Peace Corps workers felt: both found the surface of American life surrealistically absurd, somehow less than fully human, not worthy of the seriousness they knew within themselves. And much of what the vets suffer is attendant to *all* those who live on the margins of society, free of its dominant myths; and this, after all, is something about which some writers and artists know.

Beyond that, most of the vets, though confronted by the deepest philosophical questions, have little knowledge of philosophy or of the great and grave human texts in which over centuries other men and women have created a tradition of concern. The greatest thinkers about guilt, for instance, have been theologians and novelists. Sophocles, Kierkegaard, Conrad in *The Heart of Darkness*, Dostoyevsky in *Crime and Punishment* and Tolstoy in *War and Peace* have all placed at the very heart of human existence the issues that plague the vets.

The vets' suffering, in sum, has in fact brought them closer to the heart of their culture than anything else might have done, but how can they know that, and, knowing it, how can they make use of it? For most of them, the deep seriousness visited upon them, which ought to make them feel more fully human, has merely served to isolate them and to make them feel like monsters and pariahs rather than men.

The other losers are the intellectuals themselves, because much of what the vets have to say would be of use to those who took the time to listen. What confronts the vets, after all, is the same moral landscape that confronts us all, a set of ambiguities, confusions and inadequacies that run through our culture from top to bottom. I remember once describing to a woman friend, a writer, how it was the vets felt. "But that's it, that's it exactly," she said. "That's how I felt having my abortions, after the abortions. The same sense of significance and meaning. The same sense of isolation—no one on either side of the question to understand how I felt. The difficulty in straightening it out in my mind, the loneliness of having no one who would forgive me and also understand my refusal to forgive myself."

The vets' difficulty in coming to terms with their own past, coupled with their refusal to put it aside, their stubbornness in clinging to its inchoate power, is not very different from the even more hidden yearnings and sorrows of many Americans about many things—yearnings and sorrows for which we no longer have a usable language, and which no longer form (as they once would have) the center of our conversations about what it means to be human.

What is more, the vets' loss of the myths that ordinarily protect people from the truth has brought them face to face with several problems that beleaguer almost all those who approach value from a secular position: the difficulty of dealing with questions of good and evil in the absence of divine, absolute and binding powers or systems. We have learned by now—or we should have—that humans kill just as easily in God's absence as they do in his name, and that the secularization of value, which people believed a hundred years ago might set them free of ignorance and superstition, leads along its own paths to ignorance and superstition. To be absolutely honest, *none* of us who are secular thinkers have anything more than the tatters of past certainty to offer in regard to establishing and sustaining morality, or increasing kindness in men and women and justice in the world. These questions, which plague the vets, ought to plague every thinking man and woman, and none of us can afford to ignore the vets' experience.

In the end, what we owe the dead (whether our own or the Vietnamese), what we owe the vets and what we owe ourselves is the same thing: the resumption of the recurrent conversation about moral values, the sources and meaning of conscience, and the roots of human generosity, solidarity and community. If the Vietnam memorial manages to remind us that this is what is missing and what must be begun, that is fine. If not, then it will become—no matter how moving or lovely—simply another means by which, in the name of memory, we destroy the past. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Gambling on Renewal

ELIZABETH FRANK

LETTERS FROM A FATHER AND OTHER POEMS. *By Mona Van Duyn. Atheneum. 64 pp. $11.95. Paper $6.95.*

To say that Mona Van Duyn is a poet of dailiness and domesticity, of walking the dog and putting up peaches, is to give only a partial account of her world. Though she gives these their due, it is in facing up to the played-out, stale and unrenewable facts of existence that she finds her true voice. Take "The Fear of Flying," for instance, from *Merciful Disguises*, Van Duyn's collected poems (published in 1973 and reissued this year), where she shows us herself and her husband at the airport:

> ready to leave on my little trip,
> I tell you goodbye and start
> to get in line at the door, our relationship
> so old we don't kiss . . .

Or consider these lines from "Open Letter, Personal," from *A Time of Bees*:

> But believe me, my friends, we are in the late essays. A decade
> has used us so that when we go out, we are at home.
> We know each other's gestures like a book, we can hide
> nothing personal but the noises of sex and digestion and boredom . . .

When friendship and love have run out of surprises, when what we don't know is what we've decided to ignore, we are in Van Duyn territory. But whereas the noises of sex, digestion and boredom can be hidden from friends, they are hideously audible in the family, the inescapable intimacy of which is Van Duyn's true hell. The first section of *Letters From A Father* gives us the agony of the adult forced to endure her parents' decline into enfeeblement and despair. The father's voice, in the title poem, speaks (with stunning accuracy) in the hypochondriacal whine that is old age's ticket to second childhood:

> Ulcerated tooth keeps me awake, there is
> such pain, would have to go to the hospital to have
> it pulled or would bleed to death from the blood thinners,
> but can't leave Mother, she falls and forgets her salve
> and her tranquilizers, her ankles swell so and her bowels
> are so bad, she almost had a stoppage and sometimes
> what she passes is green as grass.

This particular poem takes a cheerful turn. The daughter sends her parents a bird feeder, and it awakens memory:

> We can see
> them good from where we sit, big ones and little ones
> but you know when I farmed I used to like to hunt . . .

Amid the deafness and the belching and the scabs threatening to turn into warts, comes laughter—"The birds are eating and fighting. Ha! Ha!"—and something like desire:

> Your Mother hopes
> you can send us a kind of book that tells about birds.

Soon he reports that they pet the birds that stun themselves against the window, and study the book which comes in the mail. Father pulls his own tooth—"it didn't bleed at all," and Mother "forgets her laxative but bowels move fine." What had been lost—the future—is found: "I am going to keep/feeding all spring, maybe summer, you can see/they expect it."

In its wisdom, its humor, its plainness, *Letters From A Father* is moving the way Van Duyn's *Bedtime Stories* is moving. Like that sequence, which transcribed and distilled the poet's grandmother's speech, it remains staunchly unliterary. Harnessed in coarse and grainy slant-rhymes, the vernacular carries everything: the dignity and reality of common life, the sufferings of someone loved and the claustrophobia of love itself. Through the tender, common-sensical gift of the bird feeder—not through art—the poet has gambled on renewal and won. But renewal is by no means a sure bet. In "Photographs," Van Duyn watches in helpless sadness as her parents discard old photos of themselves, abandoning all that is left of their private selves. She is, as she says, "one witnessing heart," who cannot keep oblivion away.

The recognition of this helplessness is nowhere more apparent than in "The Stream." Using slant-rhyming couplets and ordinary speech, she describes her last visit with her mother, now a widow and confined to a nursing home:

> On the last night I helped you undress. Flat dugs
> like antimacassars lay on your chest, your legs
>
> and arms beetle-thin swung from the swollen belly
> (the body no more misshapen, no stranger to see,
>
> after all, at the end than at the beloved beginning).
> You chose your flowered nightgown as most becoming.

The lines sum up a life with words Whitman might have used, although their intimacy, their focus upon one individual human being, would have been unbearable for him. But why love makes courage possible, or just what love is, the poet does not pretend to know.

The poems in the second section, which are mostly about places, are disappointing. In the past, Van Duyn has made distinguished contributions to the observation-and-description poem, that line perfected by Elizabeth Bishop in which a kind of *National Geographic* curiosity and detachment yield detailed celebrations of the external world. In "Postcards From Cape Split," for instance (in *To See, To Take*), Van Duyn anchors a place so securely in its facts that its completeness of being, its *thereness*, stands as proof of the world's reassuring thereness too:

> Everything looks like the sea but the sea.
> The sea looks like a lake
> except when fucus is dumped on its low-tide border
> like heaps of khaki laundry left out to rot—
> this seems a capacity for waste that is worthy of an ocean.
> But the diningroom floor looks like the sea,
> wide old boards, painted dark green,
> that heave and ripple in waves.
> Light hits the crest of each board and gives it a whitecap.

The new poems about places lack movement and definition. The sharp, crisp language of "In the Missouri Ozarks" remains merely well tooled, while the details fail to tell us anything new about its by-now standard subject,

Elizabeth Frank's biography of Louise Bogan will be published next year by Knopf.

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the American highway. Usually rigorous, Van Duyn lapses into cuteness at the end of "Moose in the Morning, Northern Maine," describing a row of finches on a telephone wire as "little golden bells" and rejoicing "as that compulsive old scribbler, the universe/ jots down another day." "Madrid, 1974" is labored and discursive, while "Madrid, May, 1977," about Spain on the eve of its first post-Franco election, is spoiled by flat, lifeless language. A man dickers over a litter of puppies with three possible customers,

> each of whom has for a moment
> forgotten
> that, in a few weeks, having placed
> a slip of paper in a plastic urn,
> into his empty right hand will fall
> responsibility for his own life
> and a share of responsibility for the
> world.

This is sincerely felt, no doubt, but it sounds pompous and didactic. Wit and tough-mindedness return, along with lively colloquial speech, in "At Père Lachaise," an account of a cold and rainy excursion through the great Parisian cemetery—a "spooky pilgrimage" indeed—that becomes hallucinatory when a friend cries out at the sight of

> two of the great dun tombs
> . . . dappled with color, with cats,
> more cats than I can believe . . .
> Grimalkins, grandpas,
> lithe rakes, plump dowagers,
> princes, peasants, old warriors,
> hoydens,
> gray, white, black, cream, orange,
> spotted, striped and plain—

One of Van Duyn's powers as a poet is just this capacity for finding live cats on marble tombs. In the book's third and fourth sections she conjures dappled poems out of the graveyard of convention and tradition. "Caring For Surfaces" is a splendid parody of and homage to the Hopkins of the "terrible sonnets," a celebration of housekeeping afire with furious affection:

> Birds build but not I build, no, but
> wipe, Time's wife.
> Dipped in detergent, dish and chandelier retrieve
> their glister, sopped, kitchen floor
> reflowers, knife
> rubbed with cork unrusts, colors of
> carpetweave
> cuffed with shampooer and vacuum
> will reblush . . .

Wickedly, in "Cinderella's Story," she reverses the fairy tale, offering not a glass slipper but a smelly old sneaker:

> I learned wholly to love
> the man in the prince, what didn't
> dance:
> bad breath in the morning, sexual
> clumsiness,
> a childlike willingness to let the old
> queen
> dominate.

A skilled and unintimidated formalist, Van Duyn includes a delicate and bittersweet lyric, "Fall"; a caprice called "A Reading of Rex Stout"; and the warm and well-turned "Ballad of Blossom," about an amorous cow. Van Duyn's light verse is comely and unfailingly generous, yet she is not, I think, essentially a light poet. She writes in a bleak oracular style, in "The Learners," of what happens to young artists when they put their apprenticeship behind them and enter the world. She exposes outright philistine stupidity and cruelty in "The Vision Test," a complex rhyming fable about one of those *nice* ladies who administer driver's-license vision tests and call everyone "Honey" and "Dear." In this instance, having asked Van Duyn's profession, she breaks into mocking laughter when the poet answers that she is, in fact, just that—a poet. Of course it is Van Duyn who has failed the "vision test" by allowing herself to believe in the bureaucrat's benevolence.

My own favorite poem in the new book, "Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey," is simple in structure and statement. Watching a circus aerialist spinning fifty death-defying times, Van Duyn overhears a child sneering, "That's easy,/I could do that." The poem illuminates large subjects—art and the enemies of art, as well as life and death—without ever straying from its immediate circus setting. It is a more compressed poem than Van Duyn usually writes, as well as an unambiguous and defiant *No* from a poet who usually tries harder than many of her contemporaries to coax affirmation out of the waste and exhaustion of modern life. □

'Dark, Ironical, Flip'

MICHAEL GORRA

THE BOY SCOUT HANDBOOK AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS. *By Paul Fussell. Oxford University Press. 284 pp. $15.95.*

Paul Fussell led an infantry platoon during World War II; in "My War," the concluding essay in this collection, he says that it was the most important thing he ever did. Combat gave him a "dark, ironical, flip" sensibility and made him, for life, "a pissed-off infantryman, disguised as a literary and cultural commentator," deeply suspicious of euphemism and sentimentality. Small wonder that when he became an English professor after the war, he specialized in that superbly skeptical period, the eighteenth century, and that when he turned to the twentieth century, he produced *The Great War and Modern Memory*, a wise and compassionate account of the way an entire generation lost its illusions in the trenches of World War I. It is a book that could only have been written by an ex-soldier, and is one of the few critical works of the last decade that are likely to be read as literature a generation from now.

The Boy Scout Handbook and Other Observations reprints thirty-four essays and reviews, most of them written in the last five years and originally published in *The New Republic*, *Harper's* or *The New York Times Book Review*. They are written, Fussell says in his preface, in the spirit of George Orwell, whose work has persuaded him that "literary, cultural, social, ethical, and political commentary can be virtually the same thing." No one today writes so well as Fussell about what Orwell called "good bad books"—books, in Fussell's words, which display a "vigorous literary-moral life" but which lie outside the range of most "humanistic criticism." One of the best essays here, for example, is on Grosset & Dunlap's 1965 bowdlerization of Booth Tarkington's *Penrod* to eliminate Tarkington's "characteristic affectionate condescension toward Negroes." In doing so, Fussell argues, the editors have expunged any suggestion that racism ever existed, and so lost the point of the scene in which Penrod comes to loathe another boy for picking on his black friend. It's a fine essay in the tradition of Orwell's "Boys' Weeklies," to which Fussell says his "debt . . . is obvious."

Michael Gorra lives in Palo Alto. He has written for The American Scholar *and* The Hudson Review.

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But since Fussell invokes that debt, one has to say that in general his sensibility is not very close to Orwell's. "My War" has fun at the expense of the young Paul Fussell, with his "terrible naïveté" and "pathetic disposition to be pleased in the face of boredom and finally horror." The essay's dominant sense is that of a battle won—not just the war but the battle to overcome his illusions, to acknowledge the unreasonableness of human action. But victory affords a certain satisfaction, and in Fussell's case I think a certain self-satisfaction. He's so happy to have overcome his youthful illusions that he seems to be congratulating himself on having conquered some rare and debilitating disease, instead of a common childhood ailment, like chicken pox. Can one imagine Orwell describing himself as "dark, ironical, flip"? The precise words don't matter; the attitude toward the self does.

In any case, can one so easily equate the ironic and the flip? For all their acuteness of observation, some of these essays are vitiated by a sarcasm that Fussell himself, writing of Paul Theroux's *The Old Patagonian Express*, calls "morally facile." Take "Being Reviewed: The A.B.M. and Its Theory." A.B.M. is Fussell's acronym for "Author's Big Mistake . . . the letter from an aggrieved author complaining about a review," which editors love because it gives them "a lot of signed copy without having to pay for it." Fussell's contention is that authors should have the grace not to complain about the reviews they receive. I think he's right, but he uses the occasion to indulge in a cheap triumph over those who are bothered by negative reviews. He cites May Sarton as one who has gone on record (in *Recovering: A Journal*) about the anguish caused by a bad review, and then he unloads:

> Empirically, it's generally true that unfavorable observations in reviews are remembered only by authors or reviewers, very seldom by readers. But the May Sartons of this world are too fascinated with the state of their feelings to notice what really goes on in the world out there, including the book business.

That "superior disgust" (again, from his review of Theroux) also marks Fussell's attitude toward the furniture of modern life, "the shopping malls, the slimy artificial fibers, the rotten trains, the boring frozen food, and the boring packaged politics, the one-liners replacing wit." Perhaps—although a loathing for modern life as embodied in shopping malls is by now a sentimental cliché, and one to which Fussell stoops with tedious regularity. But a short piece cannot carry very much of that disgust, and it carries even less when reprinted in a book than it does upon initial publication in a magazine. One might say that if he wrote at greater length he would be able both to justify his biting, sarcastic contentions and to elevate them into irony. One might say so—if it weren't for the fact that two of the longest pieces, "Being Reviewed" and "Notes on Class," are far more triumphantly flip than anything else in the book. Orwell often let himself fly into outrage at the "smelly little orthodoxies" of his time, but even at his most venomous, his anger, unlike Fussell's, is fine and generous.

Fussell's enthusiasms are so strong that he sometimes presents a narrow and misleading view of his subjects. He lauds the latest edition of *The Official Boy Scout Handbook*, for example, describing it as one of the few modern books that "could be called compendia

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of good sense." The *Handbook* affirms the value of

> looking objectively outward and losing consciousness of self in the work to be done. . . . From its explicit ethics you can infer such propositions as "A scout does not tap his acquaintance's telephones," or "A scout does not bomb and invade a neutral country, and then lie about it."

The *Handbook* I used as a scout in the late 1960s had been notable primarily for its delicately worded injunctions against masturbation. Fussell's description made this new edition sound like a different animal, so I bought a copy—and found that it wasn't. They've gotten rid of those injunctions, and the back-of-the-book shotgun ads as well, but the simplistic patriotism is still there. The scouts may now offer a merit badge in environmental science, but they still believe in protecting ladies like the "knights of old." Fussell writes that "like the Roman Catholic Church, the scout movement knows the difference between cosmetic and real change, and it happily embraces the one to avoid any truck with the other." True—but he seems unaware that not everyone accepts the scouts' initial assumptions: their preference for a paramilitary structure, for instance. The new edition does include sections on drug abuse and energy conservation, but any backpacking handbook does a better job on the outdoors, and anyone old enough to make it through *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* will find its prose unreadable.

I have been so hard on Fussell because I think one can expect more depth and generosity, even in a collection of reprints, from a man capable of writing *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Yet the book does provide a lot of enjoyable reading. Fussell's prose is sharp and alive, and his ideas provoke thought as well as argument. There's a wonderful piece on censorship in South Africa (Pretoria is down on sex, but also on books "implying that war is either boring or dangerous or both"), and strong ones on travel and travelers and on Nabokov's *Notes on Prosody*. Though he's not as good at it as V.S. Pritchett, Fussell is a fine writer of "brief portraits," 2,000- to 3,000-word sketches of a writer's life and career, done upon the publication of a new biography, a diary, a collection of letters. Fussell does particularly well with Boswell, Maugham, Rider Haggard and Ivor Gurney, a little-known poet and composer of World War I.

Despite my cavils, parts of "My War" and nearly all of the eight essays grouped with it under the title "Versions of the Second World War" are superb. Bemoaning the fact that the novel has dominated this century at the expense of expository prose, that crowning glory of the eighteenth century, he contrasts Robert McGivern's best-selling romantic novel, *Soldiers of '44* unfavorably with Norman Lewis's ironic and little-known British war memoir, *Naples '44*. And he laments "The Regrettable Decision of Herman Wouk" to write *War and Remembrance* as "a very good popular history of the war in the guise of a very bad novel," rather than produce the major work of military history of which Fussell believes him capable. But the best of these essays is "The War in Black and White," on war photography (prints are included in the text). Here Fussell shows that he can write for the common reader yet remain as alive to the problems of representation as any fashionably fussy critical theorist.

Although none of Fussell's essays approach Orwell's or Edmund Wilson's at their best, *The Boy Scout Handbook and Other Observations* does contain a number of pieces worth reprinting. One would not have expected less. But one might have expected more. □

Truman Unexplained

RICHARD J. WALTON

TUMULTUOUS YEARS: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1949-1953. *By Robert J. Donovan. W.W. Norton & Company. 444 pp. $19.95.*

This book, the second in a two-volume study (the first was *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1945-1948*), is such an accurate, lucid, graceful account of Truman's second term that one is reluctant to report that it is ultimately disappointing. As journalism it is absolutely first-rate, but thirty years after the momentous events that crowd these pages, we should be getting history, not journalism. Robert Donovan, the Washington bureau chief of *The New York Herald-Tribune* and, after that paper's death, of the *Los Angeles Times*, obviously researched *Tumultuous Years* well and brought to it reason, fairness and balance. But the book fails because he never examines, even if to defend, the assumptions, established by the Truman Administration, that have been the basis of American foreign policy for nearly four decades.

Although he plainly has nothing but contempt for the McCarthy-Nixon-Jenner school of demagogy, Donovan never questions the Truman Administration's basic convictions: that the Soviet Union, despite its devastation in World War II, was a mortal threat, that all the incidents along the borders between the Communist world and the West were linked, that our resolve was constantly being tested by a monolithic Communism requiring a stern response.

Donovan presents factual discussion of many crucial matters: the decision to build the H-bomb, the debate over relations with the newly victorious Communist government of China, the decision to defend South Korea and invade North Korea, Truman's insistence that he did not need Congressional authorization to send troops to Korea or to Europe, his drastic increase of the military budget and so on. But one waits in vain for Donovan to analyze them from a historical perspective—even though these are the very decisions and assumptions that eventually led us into Vietnam and that still underlie our international behavior.

One wonders why Donovan, with his superb grasp of the facts, did not wonder himself why the Truman-Acheson Administration (for that is how it must be described) never made a genuine attempt to establish détente with the Soviet Union, if only to test the sincerity of Soviet protestations of peace. Now and then he essays some mild criticism, but not once does he penetrate to the root of the matter and question why the Administration did what it did. As chapter follows chapter, one begins to hope that Donovan is reserving his analysis for the end in

Richard J. Walton is the author of Henry Wallace, Harry Truman and the Cold War *and* Cold War and Counter-revolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy *(both Viking).*

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order to discuss the Truman-Acheson foreign policy as a totality.

But Donovan's summing up takes scarcely three pages. He does say, "It is a pity that after the Second World War Truman did not have a vision of how, perhaps through a different policy toward the Soviet Union, the subsequent nuclear arms race could have been averted." In that one sentence lies the theme of what could have been an important work of history.

It is, of course, impertinent for a reviewer to tell a writer what sort of book he should have written, but it seems a terrible waste that Donovan's knowledge of the Truman years should have resulted in just another journalistic account that, no matter how full and how skilled, adds little to our understanding of one of the most consequential periods of American history.

And yet, maybe in a perverse way this book *is* illuminating. If so fine and intelligent a journalist is unable to penetrate the surface of events—or prefers not to—no wonder the mainstream press, for the most part peopled by journalists far less gifted than Donovan, has so largely failed us since World War II. Public opinion does matter in a democracy, but public opinion is a creature of the organs of public information, and those organs have by and large been the servants of those in power. Rather than help steer the nation around disaster, they have generally pushed us toward it. Even the best mainstream journalists (and Donovan is surely one of the best) seldom examine the basic attitudes and assumptions of those who govern, for, despite their claims of independence of mind, they share them. □

UNCLE IN SUNSHINE

after Wallace Stevens

Well, nuncle, this plainly won't do.
"Floral Decorations for Bananas"

A long time now he's been making those trips
to Florida, to the dog races,
at the earliest sign of winter.
Relaxing with his canaries on a veranda
overlooking the beach, he watches children
reassemble the starched bones of fish.
Daylight cares for the middle-aged, he says,
clear water is what moves him.

But each winter he brings in
a little less. The odds disappoint him.
There's an insistence, now, in the rasp
of leaves across a macadam road.
Feverish winds blow down from the Carolinas,
a plague like the plagues in Venice.
Is he part of a sexual myth,
trials of the hero bound to a mast?
And the gulls—are they sirens
returned to earth to tempt him with their phrases?

Women sit near him in the restaurant
with dried, doll-faces that melt in the heat.
Overhead, the parakeets brood in their cages,
taking care of themselves, speaking
among themselves: one of the more
irritating sounds of this world.
A long time now he's been taking those walks
through the generous sunlight . . .

Uncle, it's the sea you think about these days,
ironic cries for help, radios broadcasting
Brooklyn accents and the steady baritone of waves.
There must be some way to untangle all these sounds,
like the isolation of voices in a fugue.

Steven Cramer

MUSIC.

DAVID HAMILTON

MOZART. *By Wolfgang Hildesheimer. Translated by Marion Faber. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 408 pp. $22.50.*

Wolfgang Hildesheimer is a novelist, but his Mozart is unlike those of earlier writers, from Eduard Mörike to Marcia Davenport, all of whom sought imaginatively to fill the human interstices in the documentary record of music's most prodigious genius. Unlike other eighteenth-century composers, Mozart left an extensive correspondence, and this has led biographers to treat him like the later Romantic figures—Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner—who left voluminous literary legacies, even though he belonged to an era of different sensibility and style.

Hildesheimer uses a musical metaphor for this sort of biographical treatment:

> we have before us a score consisting of only two staves—the melodic line (Mozart's music) and the bass (his external life). The connecting middle voices are missing—his unconscious, the dictates and impulses of his inner life, that which governs his motives and behavior. . . . A familiar exercise in music is to compose a third, connecting part to two that are given. . . . This is how we must regard the work of biographers. To these two other parts—the life's experience and its (assumed) expression in an *oeuvre*—they compose a connecting line.

The figure derived from nearly two centuries of such composition—"the eternal boy-man, a mixture of lucid Apollonian, innocent child of nature, and radiant darling of the muses"—Hildesheimer considers a pious fabrication, a response to the nineteenth century's demand that creators' lives should match their works in moral and ethical purity.

This book is, then, "not least, a book of disagreement, a response to provocation," an effort "to restore the enigma that is the man." The process of deconstruction begins with the standard biographers, whose more extravagant fancies are easily ridiculed, especially their special pleading on behalf of Salzburg and Vienna, two cities where Mozart was badly treated during his life but which have profited from his memory ever since. More significant is

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Hildesheimer's attack on the "eyewitnesses," particularly those involved in the biography compiled by Constanze Mozart's second husband, Nissen. Assembled many years after the composer's death, when his reputation greatly exceeded that of his adult life, these testimonies were subject not only to the incursions of time and legend upon memory but also to the proddings of self-interest, the desire to claim at least reflected glory or to expunge personal weaknesses from the record. (The Nissens actually censored some of Mozart's late letters—not only in published form but in the manuscripts themselves.) Previous biographers have tended to accept unreliable evidence as "better than nothing," but Hildesheimer is inclined to regard it as worse than nothing.

And, finally, there is Mozart's own testimony, in those famous letters. Sometimes their unreliability is transparent and Hildesheimer neatly pricks it, as in this vignette clearly written for father Leopold's benefit:

> "At six I go to Cannabich's and give Mlle Rosa her lesson. I stay there to supper, after which we talk or occasionally they gamble. If it is the latter, I always take a book out of my pocket and read—." Good try, Wolfgang, but it won't do. Which book was it, actually?

One of Hildesheimer's strongest techniques is his close analysis of the language of Mozart's letters, especially the composer's adoption of an *opera seria* mode to distance himself from emotion, or sometimes to parody it. In such cases, as with the notorious fecal punning, the fact of translation is a handicap (though not the actual execution thereof; the letters are quoted in Emily Anderson's familiar and skillful versions, and Marion Faber has done an admirable job of reproducing Hildesheimer's text and tone).

In form as well as in content, the book is an anti-biography, a quest rather than a life, interweaving biographical themes and the personal relationships that focus them: Mozart's creditor Puchberg and the money problem; his father, Leopold, and the prodigy's childhood; his first love Aloysia Weber and his young adulthood; his Augsburg cousin and the scatological humor he shared with her as well as with his family; his wife, Constanze, and his growing isolation in Vienna, leading back to the final months with their many mysteries, financial and personal, hinted at by obscure remarks and

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—Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, *Chicago Tribune Book World*

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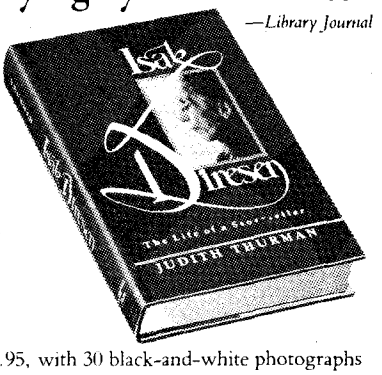

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the suppressions in the letters. (An appended chronology will assist the nonscholarly reader in keeping things in order.) The search is artfully made an integral part of the result: amid the debris of discarded *idées reçus*, we catch an occasional glimpse of eccentric genius concealing itself and caught in the act. Hildesheimer compares his work to the restoration of a fresco, and his result, fragments rather than a whole, resembles the most zealous of such efforts; an ornate fabrication has been stripped away, revealing a badly eroded but unquestionably genuine original.

Sometimes the method is too artful; the author's cat-and-mouse game of ridiculing his predecessors by aping them gets out of hand, yielding bald assertions (for example, that Mozart was in love with the singer Nancy Storace) that are quite as unfounded as any of the standard legends. He is also much given to generalizing about the behavior of genius: "The true genius is not helpfully communicative, which is not to say that he could not be sociable, sometimes to excess." It is never clear whether such remarks are offered as axioms or as empirical statements.

Hildesheimer's attack on the use of Mozart's music as evidence of his inner life is the least successful aspect of his assault, because it is limited to discussion of the biographical significance of Mozart's choice of keys (the "tragic" G minor, the "Masonic" E-flat major, and so on). Hildesheimer repeatedly taunts his predecessors with their disagreements and inconsistencies, but he never clearly sets out the central issue. This is, as Charles Rosen has written (in reviewing Michael Levey's *The Life and Death of Mozart*, a work of gooey enthusiasm that doubtless escapes Hildesheimer's scorn only because it hasn't been published in German): "The style of Mozart's symphonies, unlike that of the works of Schumann and Berlioz, does not admit an identification between the expression of the music and a particular sensation or experience of the composer." People are stimulated to try this sort of thing with Mozart because of the plethora of biographical data; it's much less common with earlier figures (as our author notes, "Bach's life consists of dates, facts, and didactic kitsch").

Since the discussion of key significance is virtually Hildesheimer's only commerce with the actual materials of music, the lay reader—and this is clearly a book aspiring to a wide lay readership—might easily end up believing that choosing a key was the principal compositional decision faced by an eighteenth-century composer. This is hardly the case—and there is also a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of key color. Hildesheimer erroneously suggests that it can hardly have been intersubjective, given the variability of pitch in Mozart's day. But key color is independent of pitch; it is determined by the tuning of string instruments and particularly by the prevalence of open (unstopped) strings in some keys and their absence in others: A major sounds like A major whether A is tuned to today's 440 Hertz or to an older, lower standard—except to those unfortunates (a minority even among professional musicians) with absolute pitch.

I doubt that Hildesheimer's deconstruction of the Nymphenburg china model of Mozart will significantly affect the status of the music—certainly not as much as the current impetus toward archeological accuracy in performance style is likely to affect its sound. (Hildesheimer's passing reference to this movement is scornful, and disappointingly so, not because he is wrong to doubt but because he doubts for the wrong reasons. But that is a question for another occasion.) By now, at least in America (and probably in Europe—certainly in Salzburg), "Mozart" is less a historical personality than a brand name attached to a hopelessly corrupted iconographic tradition of bewigged blandness. No doubt in a generation or two children will think his first name was "Mostly." More extreme forms of demolition will eventually be needed; in the meantime, Hildesheimer's book, for all its occasional deficiencies and musical oversights, offers valuable lessons in both methods and results. □

BLUE HOOKS IN WEATHER

What is there to do but wait
and let our lines drift,
old as we are? Above us,
lure-shaped clouds
spin among the blue
just as dusk is breathing out,
just as our hearts . . .
The static on the air pauses
as if soon there would be
something to point to,
thunder head or heat lightning.
But still, our hands seem
a synecdoche for the trees—
idle and bent with regret
for wind, that cold sweep skyward
where the forecast washes-out.

A cider light grays and fills
our boot marks, feathered imprints
of fish bones in the clay.
Steelheads slide up the bottom stones
the way your fingers first traced
a girl's wing-light ribs,
the way your eyes now follow the light
over the sorrowful banks of fog,
a light that's, suddenly as a Red Ibis,
tugged under on its thread . . .
and the chill down your spine
is a strike angling you
toward a deep and starless catch.

Christopher Buckley

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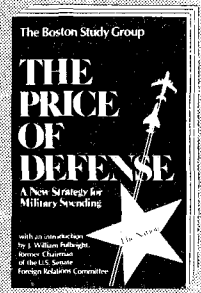

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THEATER.

RICHARD GILMAN

Plenty

No matter how far Britain sinks as a power or how enervated its social existence becomes, British playwrights continue to surprise us; the theater in England keeps being renewed. There's been an interplay between drama and political conditions there for the last twenty-five years, ever since John Osborne's Jimmy Porter complained that there were "no good, brave causes left." *Look Back in Anger* released a tremendous burst of theatrical energy which, after a lull, has resurged in a new generation of dramatists who are even more directly political than were their predecessors—Osborne, Arnold Wesker, John Arden, among others. A subject, a basis for fierce complaint, a ground for imagination, an instigation to creative assertion, politics or sociopolitics have vigorously informed a whole new group of playwrights more gifted than the corresponding generation in the United States.

David Hare is among the most talented of these younger writers—who include Howard Brenton, Stephen Poliakoff, Heathcote Williams and Barry Keefe—and *Plenty* is the sixth of the seven full-length plays he's written. It's also probably the best, although it suffers from a central structural defect (to which I'll return). The play was first produced at London's National Theatre in 1978, and its leading performer, Kate Nelligan, was chosen as that year's best actress by the British critics. Nelligan, who is Canadian, is making her first American appearance in *Plenty* and should be a prime candidate this year for our highest awards.

The play moves back and forth in time and place during the years 1943-62, shifting between London and other English cities and wartime France. Nelligan plays Susan Traherne, who at 17 was parachuted into France to work with the Resistance. The experience had been terrifying but also exhilarating—life was at its most intense and everything counted. "I met people for an hour or two," she remembers, "and I saw the best of them." When she returns home after the war, everything is flat and drab. The English are "loveless," she says, and remarks that "the people who stayed behind" now "seem childish and a little silly." Above all, England is without energy or vision; though promised "Peace and Plenty," the British have been reduced to scraping by.

"I want to move on," Susan says after her return. "I want to change everything and I don't know how." What she does do is become an advertising copywriter, a job in which success is "a matter of pitching my intelligence low enough"; she tries to have a baby with a man she's chosen for the task, and later marries a diplomat she doesn't love. From then on, she responds to life with bitterness and random violence. A last attempt to recover the lucidity and sense of purpose she'd once had is an abject failure. A one-time fellow Resistance worker has looked her up after twenty years, and they spend a night in a seedy seaside hotel. It doesn't work. The man, now a business executive, says, "I hate this life we lead," and she can only agree. The play ends with a flashback to 1944 in newly liberated France. "We have grown up," the young, ardent Susan says. "We will improve our world."

Plenty is continuously absorbing, never banal or obvious, and there are many moments of keen perception and fine emotional complexity. Yet there's something wrong at the center. Hare never does decide what is the cause of Susan's malaise. On one hand there are England, society, the meanness and absence of ideals; on the other is the protagonist's psychological pathology. "I have a weakness," she says at one point. "I like to lose control." And in one crucial scene her long-suffering husband tells her, "You are selfish; you are determined to destroy other forms of happiness."

We agree with him, and our sympathy for Susan is tempered by that awareness. Yet the character is one of the great roles in recent English-speaking drama, and, especially as it's performed by Nelligan, it triumphs over the play's confusions. The production also triumphs over some occasionally inept staging (by Hare as his own director): annoyingly long blackouts during which scenery is trundled on; a much slower pace at times than there ought to be. But Nelligan is transcendent. With her clear profile and look of aristocratic intelligence, her husky supple voice, her absolutely firm stage presence, she makes *Plenty* the most memorable occasion of the season so far. □

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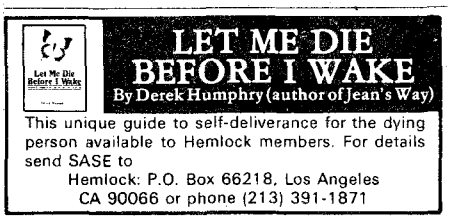
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R	O	C	K	S	■	A	U	T	O	M	A	T	O	N
E	■	H	■	T	■	R	■	I	■	O	■	H	■	D
C	O	T	E	R	I	E	■	C	O	R	T	E	G	E
?	■	S	■	I	■	S	■	K	■	E	■	■	■	R
■	O	M	E	L	E	T	■	S	C	R	U	P	L	E
O	■	E	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	R	■	D	■	■
P	A	N	A	C	H	E	■	C	O	F	F	E	R	■
P	■	■	■	O	■	A	■	A	■	R	■	M	■	C
O	F	U	S	H	E	R	■	T	H	E	F	A	L	L
S	■	N	■	E	■	N	■	S	■	S	■	T	■	I
I	N	T	E	R	F	E	R	E	■	H	O	U	S	E
T	■	I	■	E	■	D	■	Y	■	E	■	R	■	N
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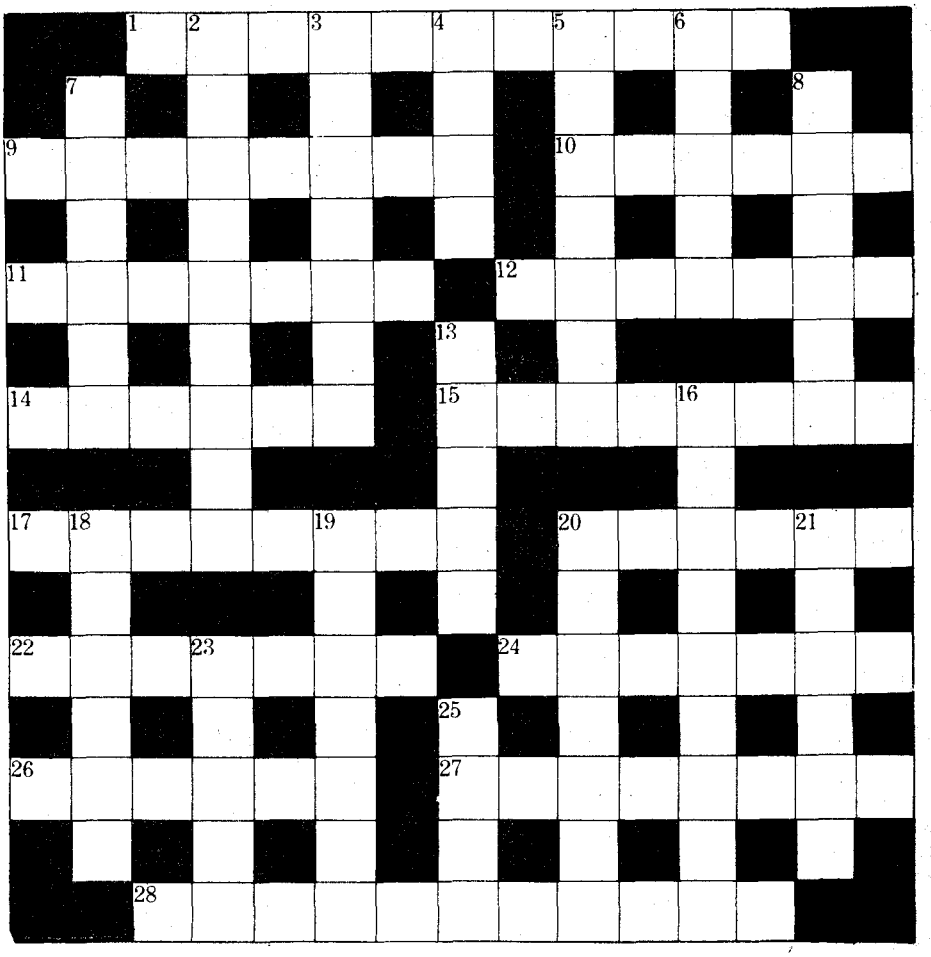
Crossword Puzzle No. 1939

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 You could expect one to be the 6 at dinner—some start at hash! (11)
9 That's one way to shorten the game! (8)
10 and 4 down Cain's wife, by implication, was certainly not the first one aboard ship. (6,4)
11 Completely flummoxed with the reflective device? (7)
12 One who unorthodoxly believes this place has a somewhat shaky conclusion? (7)
14 Oars—or other tools. (6)
15 If the only cord is twisted, you could get one of your buddies to put it in order. (3,5)
17 If you start with one for the money, you could eventually get two double orders of take-outs. (4,2,2)
20 New *Sun* due out? (6)
22 One possibly associated with the *Mayflower* should be rather succinct. (7)
24 Just the writer to give relations a little thrust forward. (7)
26 A broken arm's a peculiar thing to make capital of. (6)
27 Brandy should obviously be a lively drink. (3,2,3)
28 The place of Providence is in her idols, and otherwise. (5,6)

DOWN

2 Evidently no equipment, but a neutral position. (3,2,4)
3 They might hold salt to be different, as a group of believers. (7)
4 See 10
5 It's to use up around the country, to hold things up. (7)
6 Did one get 1100, by the sound of it, for officiating? (5)
7 See 19
8 It wasn't the naval officer Holmes said to tear down. (6)
13 See 25
16 When might be the equivalent "given crude form"? (5-4)
18 One might be found playing among the reeds. (6)
19 and 7 At one time, as well as how one was with the Musketeers? And that's final! (4,3,3,3)
20 Funny, but not ha-ha. (7)
21 A Yale man goes to the city almost, to evoke the answer. (6)
23 Quiet, and every single one will get something to eat! (5)
25 and 13 One doesn't come to a full stop at this sign—but it takes about 50 percent guts! (4-5)

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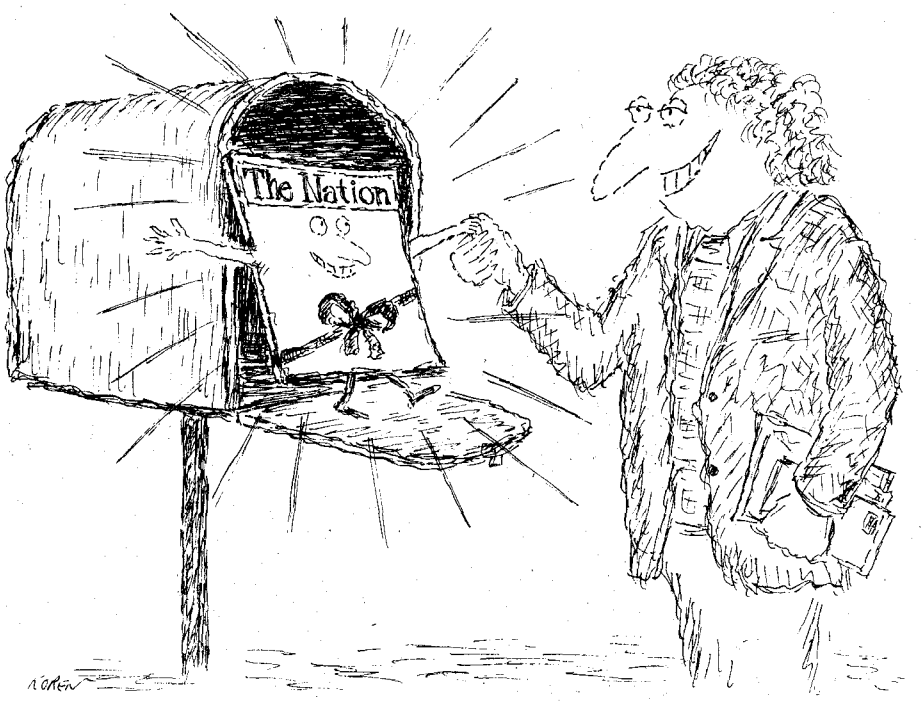

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